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Rolling in the dirt : the origins of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the politics of racism, 1870-1882.

Andrew Gyory
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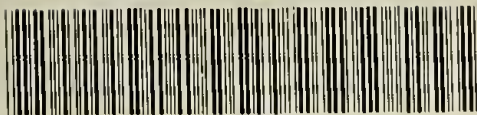
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ROLLING IN THE DIRT:
THE ORIGINS OF THE CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT
AND THE POLITICS OF RACISM, 1870-1882

A Dissertation Presented

by

ANDREW GYORY

v. 1

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

May 1991

Department of History

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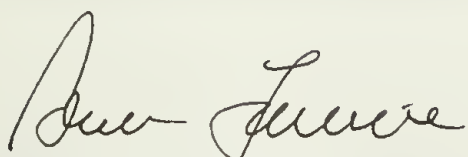
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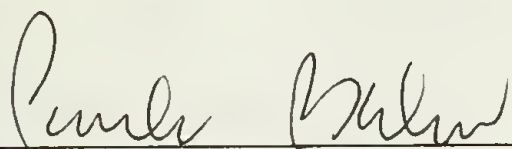
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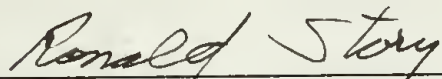
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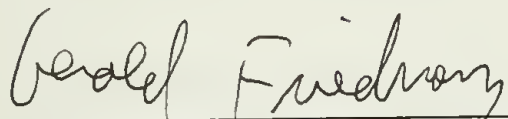
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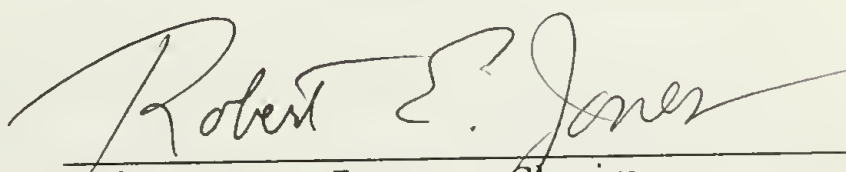
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When I delivered an early version of chapter one at the Lowell Conference on Industrial History in 1986, I was fortunate to have my paper criticized by Bruce Laurie. His tough but respectful comments showed that he took my ideas seriously, and he encouraged me to transfer to the University of Massachusetts. I followed his advice and wrote my dissertation under his direction. Bruce taught me to think historically: to study the process of history rather than to simply assign blame. He also made sure I kept my eye on the larger picture of Gilded Age politics and its connection to today. Bruce picked me up when I was on

the verge of leaving the profession and he made me believe my work was important. And he did this was humor, kindness, and affection. To Bruce I owe a debt I can never repay. I thank him for his devotion, his high standards, and for helping to fill a deep, deep void.

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ABSTRACT

ROLLING IN THE DIRT:

THE ORIGINS OF THE CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT

AND THE POLITICS OF RACISM, 1870-1882

BY ANDREW GYORY

MAY 1991

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AT AMHERST

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In 1870 a Massachusetts shoe manufacturer imported 75 Chinese workers to break a strike. This event ignited nationwide interest in Chinese immigration and ultimately led to the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, the first law ever passed by the United States banning a group of people based solely on race or nationality. The origins of the Chinese Exclusion Act involve many factors, but the most important force behind the law was national politicians who, in an era of almost perfectly-balanced party strength, seized the issue in the quest for votes.

Politicians appealed directly to voters' deep-seated racism. They manipulated the image of the Chinese immigrant--who often appeared positively and heroically in popular culture--and transformed it into something grotesque. The politics of racism brought success in the West where most Chinese immigrants had settled, but the campaign fell flat east of the Rocky Mountains. No

groundswell of support for exclusion emerged in the East in the mid-1870s. In 1877, however, after the national railroad strike revealed the stark class divisions in American society, politicians shifted their tactics and presented Chinese exclusion as a way to help the workingman. They did this in spite of the fact that eastern workers had expressed virtually no interest in the issue. Workers had long opposed the importation of Chinese laborers but not their immigration. Workers carefully distinguished between the two--a distinction ignored by politicians and historians alike.

To politicians, Chinese exclusion became a panacea for rising working-class discontent. By making the Chinese the scapegoat for the nation's industrial problems, politicians could avoid dealing with the genuine causes of the depression; they could also ignore more far-reaching solutions which would have required direct government intervention in the economy. Chinese exclusion served as class politics on the cheap. Such anti-Chinese politics served other functions as well. It helped wean Republicans away from the equal rights ideals of the Civil War and legitimized racism as national policy. A classic example of top-down politics, the Chinese Exclusion Act symbolically marked the end of Reconstruction and set a precedent for later anti-immigration legislation.

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CHAPTER 1

"YAN-KI V. YAN-KEE":

AMERICAN WORKERS REACT TO CHINESE LABORERS IN 1870

"I don't object to their coming here. Let 'em come single-handed, like other emigrants, and take their chance. But they come banded together. That isn't right."

--unidentified Crispin, North
Adams, Massachusetts, 1870

The Spark

On June 13, 1870, seventy-five Chinese men and boys stepped off a train in North Adams, Massachusetts. They had been imported from San Francisco by Calvin T. Sampson, a shoe manufacturer, to break a strike by the Knights of St. Crispin. By contract, Sampson had agreed to employ them for three years and pay their return passage back to California. Sampson also agreed to provide them with free water and firewood. For an eleven-hour workday, he would pay them roughly ninety cents--less than one-third the striking Crispin's wage of three dollars a day.¹

A crowd of 2,000 people, most of whom had never before seen an Asian person, gathered near the depot to watch as the "swarthy strangers" disembarked on New England soil. Sampson stepped off the train first. A man of "excitable temperament," he waved a pistol in the air and urged the

crowd to step back. Rumors of impending violence against the Chinese-born strikebreakers had flashed through town ever since word of the scheme had surfaced in late May. Fearing trouble, Sampson had journeyed to Troy, N.Y., to arm each of the seventy-five Chinese with knives. He had also hired a squad of thirty extra policemen. "There has never been such excitement here as on that Monday evening," one reporter noted. "The streets were crowded with people." All of North Adams seemed to be in attendance to greet the Chinese. "As soon as the blue shirts, long cues, and queer faces were seen, the air was filled with hoots and all kinds of taunting shouts." Seeming unperturbed, the Chinese immigrants walked quietly in double-file through town to Sampson's three-story, brick-walled factory. Except for the shouts and the throwing of one or two stones, the Chinese marched without incident through the "pleasant Berkshire village." Peace, however, did not last long. As some anonymous shoemaker had scrawled on the wall of Sampson's factory, "No Scabs or Rats Admitted Here." It was an omen of the coming fury.²

The North Adams episode marked the first time that Chinese laborers had been brought to an industrial town east of the Rocky Mountains to break a strike. To cover both the novelty and the controversy of the event, ten newspapers and illustrated journals sent correspondents and artists to the "quiet ... out-of-the-way ... manufacturing village" to

track the story. Their reports on the "Chinese cobblers" appeared in newspapers and magazines everywhere. The real story, however, and the real controversy, quickly shifted from North Adams to cities and towns across the country. Working people throughout the United States held mass public meetings to protest the "introduction of coolie labor." They denounced all efforts by manufacturers and capitalists to import Chinese laborers on contract to break strikes and supplant native workers. As a result of these rallies, the Chinese issue dominated headlines for the rest of the summer. Disputes over the two major concerns--imported contract labor and Chinese immigration--created vast confusion. This confusion bred controversy which divided the Republican party, tore apart abolitionists, and revealed the major fissures in post-Civil War America. The only group to maintain unity was the rank and file of the working classes.³

The arrival of Chinese workers in North Adams was a seminal event in American history. The widespread publicity and response it generated made Chinese immigration a subject of intense national debate for the first time. Twelve years later this debate would climax with passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act, the first law ever passed by the United States banning a group of immigrants based solely on race or nationality. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 set a precedent for later restrictions against Asian immigrants in

the early twentieth century and against Europeans in the 1920s. In banning Chinese immigrants from American shores, the United States government legitimized racism as national policy and provided official justification for anti-Asian bigotry that would endure for generations.

→ The origins of the Chinese Exclusion Act involve many factors. The path from North Adams in 1870 to Washington, D.C., in 1882 is neither simple nor direct. It involves numerous twists and turns through a decade of economic depression, industrial upheaval, and mounting tensions between labor and capital. It is a path weaving through a dense national forest of entrenched racism and pervasive bigotry. But racism alone cannot explain Chinese exclusion --positive, sympathetic portrayals of Chinese immigrants appeared frequently in popular culture. Nor can exclusion be attributed to organized labor or the working classes, very few of whom urged an end to Chinese immigration. Even the Pacific Coast, the region rife with anti-Chinese sentiment, cannot account for exclusion. Racism, organized labor, and the Pacific Coast all played important roles, but the single most important force behind the Chinese Exclusion Act was national politicians of both parties who seized the issue of Chinese immigration in the quest for votes. In an era of almost perfectly balanced party strength, presidential elections pivoted on a few thousand ballots, and candidates flailed desperately to get them. Chinese

immigrants, powerless and voteless, became victims of a political system characterized by legislative stalemate and razor-thin elections. Politicians also used Chinese immigration as a smoke screen. In a period of rising class conflict they aimed to deflect attention from genuine national problems--poverty, depression, and unemployment--by transforming a side issue of paltry significance into one of seemingly overriding national importance. In search of votes, politicians provided the motive force that ultimately made Chinese exclusion inevitable.

The Chinese Exclusion Act provides a classic example of top-down politics. It also provides a unique window for viewing the political system of the Gilded Age. It reveals the interactions between elected leaders, constituents, and interest groups, with the press acting as courier, translator, and arbiter. The press, and its creation of "public opinion," became a key player in forming and directing national policy. The Chinese Exclusion Act also illustrates the transformation of the Republican party from a disparate group of individuals loosely and momentarily united by the ideals of free labor, emancipation, and equal rights to its modern incarnation as a conservative, aimless, ballot-hungry organization led mainly by expediency and propelled by capital. The transformation of the Republican party was neither swift nor sudden. Nor was it complete. As late as 1882, many principled Republicans fought

exclusion adamantly. The difference, however, was that in 1870 this principled wing of the party, the wing that had fought for freedom and civil rights for freed slaves, was still ascendant and respected, if grudgingly, even by its enemies. But by 1882 this once prominent wing had been isolated to the party fringes. Once revered as the conscience of the party, these idealistic leaders were now perceived as a nuisance and portrayed as doddering sentimentalists, "humanitarian half-thinkers." The Chinese Exclusion Act reveals this fundamental change in the Republican party and the nation at large.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 also marks the symbolic end of Reconstruction, with North, South, and West uniting to usher in a new era of state-sponsored segregation. After a brief period of federal efforts to protect civil rights and promote integration, politicians found restrictive racist legislation a simpler and easier way to handle the nation's race problems. With anti-black racism temporarily in eclipse in the late 1860s and 1870s, anti-Chinese racism filled the vacuum and provided a convenient alternative in the hunt for scapegoats amid a sputtering economy. Anti-Chinese racism served as a bridge from the antebellum era to the rise of Jim Crow in the 1880s when racism again became fashionable. The Chinese Exclusion Act, with its origins directly traceable to North Adams,

remains a key legacy of the nineteenth century and its lingering impact of anti-Asian racism remains to this day.

Perhaps no group has been more closely associated with Chinese exclusion than organized labor and the working classes. In his monumental History of Labour in the United States in 1918, John R. Commons stated that as early as 1870, the "national labour movement consistently" supported the exclusion of Chinese immigrants. Four years later, Commons's student Selig Perlman went a step further and called the Chinese Exclusion Act "the most important single factor in the history of American labor." Virtually every historian who has written on the subject-- Mary Roberts Coolidge, Alexander Saxton, Gunther Barth, Stuart Creighton Miller, John Phillip Hall, Isabella Black, Dale Baum, and Gwendolyn Mink--has stressed the influence of organized labor in securing the legislation. Gunther Barth wrote that the North Adams incident in specific converted American workers into "ardent advocates of Chinese exclusion." Endorsing this claim, Stuart C. Miller concluded: "It would not be difficult to indict organized labor as the backbone of the anti-Chinese movement on a national level." Most recently Gwendolyn Mink has argued that "the anti-Chinese campaign nationalized union politics." These often-repeated arguments are wrong. They stem from a serious misreading of the evidence. Members of the working classes, from rank-and-file laborers to local union leaders to national labor

spokesmen, surely reflected the racism of the period, and like many Americans criticized the Chinese, but not until the early 1880s, when Congress was on the verge of enacting restrictive legislation did the working classes outside of the West Coast endorse Chinese exclusion. Historians' failure to distinguish between importation and immigration has warped our understanding of the origins of the Chinese Exclusion Act for more than a hundred years. This utter failure by historians can be traced to politicians of the period. Abetted by the press, Gilded Age politicians convinced the nation that American workers demanded Chinese exclusion and would be better off without the Chinese. Organized labor and the working classes, however, had virtually nothing to do with the legislation. This then is the double tragedy of the Chinese Exclusion Act. Not only did politicians close the gates on an entire race of people, they blamed this act on a group that did not seek it. Historians should no longer be fooled by their arguments.⁴

Anti-Chinese Sentiments and the Burlingame Mission

To understand the origins of the Chinese Exclusion Act and the significance of North Adams, one must understand politics and the labor movement in the post-Civil War period. One must also understand the history of Chinese immigration to the United States and the distribution of Chinese immigrants in the nation in 1870. The vast majority

of the nation's 63,254 Chinese residents lived on the Pacific Coast. Only a handful lived east of the Rocky Mountains. When the 75 Chinese laborers disembarked in North Adams, they instantly quadrupled the Chinese population of New England from 24 to 99. Even with their arrival, the number of Chinese in the entire Northeast and Midwest did not exceed 200.⁵ Lack of contact, however, did not prevent Americans in the East from forming opinions of Chinese immigrants or reinforcing stereotypes common on the West Coast. Newspapers described the Chinese as "almond-eyed, spindle-legged," "yellow-skinned and bald-pated." They were "repulsive ... impure ... and opium-drunk from the cradle to the grave." Hinton Rowan Helper called them "counterfeit human beings." Party affiliation made little difference. The Democratic New York Star called the Chinese immigrant "filthy, unnatural, and abominable," while the Republican Cincinnati Gazette labelled him a "dependent, ignorant ... animal machine." The New York Tribune, the nation's foremost Republican journal, called the Chinese individual

thoroughly unlike any of the European races.... he has very little of what we call self-respect; he is full of petty deceits and all those vices of character which make persons despicable.... He is sly, subtle, and tricky ... [and] hardly knows what we mean by the word honor.

Genetics and culture combined to ruin the Chinese race:

"they are hereditary and life-long minors. Ages of bondage

have sapped the foundations of character and emasculated their manhood."⁶

Religious differences compounded the racism. The "greasy heathen workmen" belonged to the "beastly idolatrous Mongolian race." The New York Herald, the most widely read newspaper in the country, described the Chinese in 1870 "as barbarous as ever. Their pagan savageness appears to be impregnable to the mild influences of Christian civilization." As the Northampton (Massachusetts) Free Press stated:

Their religion is more disgusting than the rankest Mormonism; their habits are that of swine; their customs are paganism gone to seed; their females are all prostitutes; their ideas of marriage are gross and depraved; their perceptions of virtue are a myth....⁷

The Free Press may have been influenced by Charles Francis Adams, Jr., scion of the distinguished Massachusetts family. Speaking before the American Social Science Association in 1869, the descendant of two presidents depicted the Chinese as "semi-civilized, ignorant," and unable to "change or assimilate." Better to "organize an emigration from Sodom" than from China, he added, fearing that "contact with such a race will brutalize the inhabitants of the Pacific States more than contact with the harmless African ever brutalized the South; and what can such a race add to our political or moral or intellectual growth?" Adams was in good company. In one of the most-

quoted passages of the time, preeminent journalist Bayard Taylor wrote:

It is my deliberate opinion that the Chinese are, morally, the most debased people on the face of the earth. Forms of vice which in other countries are barely named, are in China so common, that they excite no comment among the natives. They constitute the surface-level, and below them are deeps on deeps of depravity so shocking and horrible, that their character cannot even be hinted.... Their touch is pollution, and ... justice to our own race demands that they should not be allowed to settle on our soil.⁸

Even the most progressive, open-minded individuals of the era were not immune to hurling racial epithets. Wendell Phillips, who would defend unrestricted Chinese immigration to his dying day, called the Chinese "barbarous," "machine"-like, and of an "alien blood," capable of "dragging down the American home to the level of the houseless street herds of China." And liberal-thinking John Stuart Mill feared that Chinese immigration could result in "a permanent harm" to the "more civilized and improved portion of mankind."⁹

This pervasive anti-Chinese sentiment has been amply documented by Stuart Creighton Miller. In The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese 1785-1882, Miller shows the depth and breadth of anti-Chinese racism throughout the United States in the nineteenth century. Miller argues that this nationwide racism, rather than the lobbying by California alone (as earlier historians such as Mary Roberts Coolidge had argued) provided the impetus for Chinese exclusion. Although persuasive, Miller never carefully examines the paths of causation. He never

demonstrates how popular racism actually led Congress to enact exclusion. While he ably traces the origins of anti-Chinese racism he fails to trace the origins of Chinese exclusion. Racism surely facilitated but did not cause exclusion.¹⁰

The motive force came initially from politicians in the West. Chinese exclusion first became a political issue in California where more than 75% of the Chinese-American population lived. Lured by the promise of riches during the Gold Rush of 1849, thousands of immigrants from China and the world over poured into San Francisco and the mining regions in the early 1850s. Many of the Chinese immigrants signed contracts in their native land and agreed to work for a set period of time at exceedingly low wages. Combining economic grievances with ingrained racism, white Californians immediately targeted the non-Europeans for abuse. As early as 1852, State Senator Philip A. Roach urged an end to Chinese immigration. The issue cropped up repeatedly over the next two decades, and amid a looming post-war depression on the West Coast in the late 1860s, politicians and union leaders began calling for Chinese exclusion. As Alexander Saxton has shown, the issue remained powerful as a vote-getting measure and unified West Coast workers. But exclusionist sentiment remained localized in the decade's closing years, and like the

Chinese themselves, seldom crossed the barrier of the Rocky Mountains.¹¹

The Burlingame mission of 1868 reveals the dormancy of Chinese immigration as a national issue. In 1861, President James Buchanan appointed three-term Republican Congressman Anson Burlingame of Massachusetts Minister to China. Burlingame arrived in Peking in 1862, befriended the Chinese Emperor, and soon became a trusted confidante in his inner circle. When Burlingame announced his intention to resign his position in 1867, the Emperor offered to appoint him Chinese Minister to the United States. Burlingame accepted and paid an official visit to his native country the following year. A sizeable entourage of Chinese officials accompanied him to America. The tour, with stops in San Francisco, New York, Washington, Buffalo, and Niagara Falls, turned into a triumphal procession. The Chinese legation received "continual ovation" and enormous publicity everywhere it went. "The land of Confucius has greeted the land of Washington," Burlingame told an appreciative audience in Boston. Americans everywhere heralded the trip as the dawn of a great new era in U.S.-China relations anticipating, in Burlingame's words, that China "will come out of her seclusion and enter upon a course of trade, the importance of which and the amount of which no man can compute."¹²

The fabled China trade, conjuring up images of untold wealth, attracted attention from all parts of the nation but especially in Washington. While visiting the nation's capital, Burlingame and the Chinese met with President Andrew Johnson, his Cabinet, and leading members of Congress. The press reported the encounters favorably, and despite the ever-present shadow of racism, treated the Chinese officials with dignity and respect. [See figure 1.1] Amid this atmosphere of friendship and good-will, Burlingame took it upon himself to negotiate a new treaty between the two nations. Secretary of State William H. Seward guided the Chinese minister and helped Burlingame compose a new treaty raising China to full diplomatic status and "an equal among the nations." Seward and Burlingame expected the treaty to give the United States an upper hand over European nations in dealing with China and open the "Celestial Empire" to increased American commerce. One clause in the treaty granted Chinese citizens the same right as people of other nations to emigrate freely to the United States. "I am glad," Burlingame declared at a banquet in his honor, "that while she [the U.S.] applies her [free emigration] doctrines to the swarming millions of Europe, she is not afraid to apply them to the tawny race of Tamerlane and Genghis Khan."¹³

On July 24, 1868, the Senate overwhelmingly ratified the new treaty.¹⁴ The Burlingame Treaty, as it came to



Figure 1.1. In this illustration by Thomas Nast, Miss Columbia presents China to the "family of nations." All of Europe (with the notable exception of the Pope) bows in his honor while a satisfied Burlingame sits quietly in the background.

Source: Harper's Weekly, July 18, 1868.

be called, received sterling reviews and bipartisan endorsement. Coming in a highly explosive period--two months after Johnson's impeachment trial, a few weeks after the national nominating conventions, and four days before final passage of the Fourteenth Amendment--the Burlingame Treaty created a rare moment of unity during the nation's first post-war presidential campaign. Envisioning immense new trade, the New York World noted the "vast commercial importance" of Burlingame's mission, while the New York Herald equated the impact of the treaty with Columbus's voyage to America. Congressman James G. Blaine of Maine lavished praise on his fellow Republican and called his diplomatic tour "the most important mission which China ever sent to Christian nations." The immigration clause excited no concern. Politicians, editors, labor leaders, and workers made no mention of it. Neither Republicans nor Democrats raised the issue at their political conventions. Nor did delegates to the National Labor Congress which met in New York in September. Chinese immigration was not yet a political issue. But the Herald sounded a warning bell that would reverberate loudly in the years to come. Hoping that Chinese laborers might someday help serve to intimidate insolent Irish and black domestics, the editor noted that "the unsurpassed value of Chinese servants promises to relieve housekeepers in our Atlantic States from the annoyances to which they are now tyrannically subjected by

independent Bridget in the North and by emancipated Dinah in the South." Employers would soon learn how to utilize the Chinese to challenge working-class power.¹⁵

Imported Labor and the American Worker

The eight year period between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the depression in 1873 was a vibrant era in American labor history. David Montgomery has argued that several hundred thousand industrial workers belonged to trade unions, marking the highest proportion of any time in the nineteenth century. The chief issue galvanizing the labor movement during Reconstruction was the eight-hour workday. Several states passed laws mandating an eight-hour day for government workers, and in June 1868 (when Burlingame was receiving accolades throughout the country) Congress enacted the eight-hour workday for federal employees. This landmark legislation was seldom enforced, however, and the eight-hour day would remain the lightning rod for working-class protest for the next two generations. Other issues also united workers in the early Reconstruction era: arbitration to settle strikes, an end to convict labor, and government inspection of factories and mines. Another major working-class grievance in this era was the importation of contract labor, workers hired and brought from a foreign country to work in the U.S. for a set period

of time. Imported contract labor in the form of indentured servitude was older than the nation itself, dating back to the earliest white settlements in British North America. In exchange for passage to the colonies, thousands of immigrants agreed to work for a set number of years before gaining their freedom. Before the Revolutionary War, more than half of the nation's immigrants south of New England came to America as indentured servants. The institution practically died out by the early nineteenth century but revived in modified form when manufacturers began importing skilled workers on contract from Britain to operate the machinery in the nation's new factories. Contracts varied from two to six years at first, but by 1850 became standardized at twelve months or less. Despite the range of workers brought over--machinists, cutlers, textile operatives, and carpet weavers--importation remained limited and sporadic in the 1840s and 1850s and little opposition surfaced. Meanwhile, millions of immigrants poured in from Ireland and Germany amply supplying hands for the nation's burgeoning industrial economy.¹⁶

Labor relations changed during the Civil War. Massive enlistment in the Union Army decimated the workforce, and caused a shortage of labor for the first time in generations. Influential economist Henry Carey, long a proponent of increased immigration, began lobbying heavily for the importation of workers from abroad. Manufacturers

receptive to the idea began organizing agencies to recruit them. In 1863, bankers, lawyers, railroad presidents, and politicians from the East and Midwest incorporated the American Emigrant Company in Hartford, Connecticut, to procure "miners, mechanics (including workers in iron and steel of every class), weavers, and agricultural, rail-road and other laborers ... in any numbers, and at a reasonable rate." A few months later Boston manufacturers established the Foreign Emigrant Aid Society with the same goal of importing workers. Throughout the Northeast and Midwest manufacturers and merchants--not to mention steamship companies--supported these groups; the American Emigrant Company soon had operating capital of half a million dollars. Secretary of State Seward and Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase backed these ventures strongly, and in his annual message to Congress in 1863, Lincoln gave his blessing to federal encouragement of immigration. On July 4, 1864, the U.S. government approved "An Act to Encourage Immigration." The law authorized the federal government to enforce all contracts made on foreign soil in which emigrants pledged up to one year's worth of their labor in exchange for transportation to the United States. Any land or property acquired by the immigrant could be seized in case of failure to work in fulfillment of the contract. By this act, imported labor gained the official sanction of the U.S. government.¹⁷

Agents of the American Emigrant Company scoured Europe for prospective immigrants. They set up offices in England, Scotland, Wales, Prussia, Scandinavia, Belgium, and France and advertised heavily in local newspapers. The U.S. government assisted labor importers by instructing consular officials abroad to serve as recruiting agents and distribute pamphlets, maps, and information to potential immigrants. With this joint effort between the private and public sectors, the president of the American Emigrant Company looked forward to importing 20,000 workers a year. Other companies, envisioning vast profits, jumped into the act. Within days of the law's passage, agents of mineowners from Michigan and Maine, aided by U.S. consuls in Norway and Sweden, filled a ship with over 400 Scandinavian immigrants who had signed two-year contracts at paltry wages of roughly ten dollars a month. Recruiting agents advertised openly to lure purchasers in the U.S. Thomas E. Souper, a St. Louis official of the American Emigrant Company, tried to persuade "large corporations or special industrial interests to import in sufficient quantity the special kind of labor they require." Souper targeted railroads and mining companies as well as "manufacturers of iron and steel, machinists, boiler makers, ship and house builders, [and] manufacturers of all kinds...." He promised he could get laborers of every type. Manufacturers, fearful of high investment costs, responded cautiously to such entreaties but expressed definite

interest. Factory and mineowners throughout the country--including iron mogul Andrew Carnegie--engaged imported labor in the mid-1860s.¹⁸

From its inception during the Civil War, American workers vehemently attacked the importation of foreign contract labor. Opposition intensified when employers imported laborers to break strikes. In the spring of 1864, St. Louis stove manufacturer Giles Filley refused demands of the Iron Molders' Union and imported 25 workers from Prussia on a one-year contract. Filley agreed to pay the Prussians two dollars a day, a dollar less than the going wage. Union members got wind of the scheme and alerted molders in the East to watch out for the train carrying the foreign strikebreakers. When the Prussians passed through Indianapolis, local workers intercepted them and informed them of the situation. Unswayed, the Prussians continued on to Missouri. When the train pulled in to St. Louis, members of the union and guards hired by Filley were both on hand to greet them. The Prussians sided with the striking molders. They broke their contracts, joined the union, and refused to work for Filley. This early encounter between local workers and imported strikebreakers set the stage for later confrontations.¹⁹

After Lee surrendered at Appomattox in April 1865 the two armies demobilized and the national labor shortage instantly disappeared. With hands plentiful, employers

began importing immigrants primarily to break strikes rather than to supplement their workforce. During the first peacetime summer, the Eagle Iron Works engaged the American Emigrant Company to procure Belgians to break a strike in Chicago. In 1865 and 1866, coalmine operators in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Illinois procured workers from England and Scotland to overcome local work stoppages. In 1868 New York City builders paid to import workers from Canada to break a citywide bricklayers' strike. Threats could be as potent as the reality. In June 1866 iron manufacturers in Pittsburgh warned striking workers that 800 puddlers were on their way from England. The contract labor law of 1864 gave tacit support to such schemes and government officials gave support openly. U.S. Commissioner of Immigration E. Peshine Smith, a disciple of Carey, declared importation a potent weapon employers should use to counteract the "continued success of strikes by workmen of almost all kinds."²⁰

Workers across the country repeatedly denounced importation in general and the American Emigrant Company in particular. Fincher's Trades' Review, the leading labor paper of the era, printed editorial after editorial on the subject in the mid-1860s. Other journals sympathetic to the working classes, such as the Detroit Union, also denounced emigrant companies for "importing foreign labor." The Union urged workers to unite "to counteract the evil designs of"

the importers. Workers agreed wholeheartedly. Criticizing importers' intentions "to fetch men as it were 'whole-sale' ... [to] overcrowd the country with workmen," one Cleveland wage-earner condemned the "evil tendencies of the A. E. Co. to degrade our labor." By pitting worker against worker, employers aimed to get imported laborers "safe and cheap to the desired spot: then for a little war between the 'sold' and the 'bought' men...." This unnamed Cleveland worker stressed two features: the distinction between immigration and importation, and the significance of the issue to the working classes. "Let a gradual emigration go on," he wrote, "... but when capitalists seek to crush all spirit out of us by an overwhelming emigration, we have just cause for feeling alarmed.... We desire no more than a fair shake at the old tyrant, Capital, and though he may be a tough old dog, if we get such his days are numbered."²¹

As early as 1864, labor leaders had cautioned against denouncing the imported rather than the importers. "These [imported] men should not be spurned and treated as enemies," William H. Sylvis stated,

because they are only the dupes of the wiley agents. We should rather seek to show them that they have been imposed upon; and it is our duty to aid them in retrieving what has wrongfully been taken from them. Bring them to our standards, ... and by their co-operation, we will diligently work for their as well as our good.

Sylvis, president of the Iron Molders' International Union, was the foremost labor leader of the decade. Through both

his writings and union activities he spearheaded the movement against imported contract labor. He approached union leaders in Europe to warn them against ruses of the American Emigrant Company whose agents often misrepresented labor conditions in the United States. He also attempted to negotiate agreements with union leaders abroad to crack down on workers who signed contracts with American agents. Importers frequently appeared at the site of major European strikes to lure workers to the U.S. Sylvis spoke out tirelessly against importation and denounced the emigrant companies as "a combination of capitalists [seeking] to glut the market with foreign labor and break down wages." Sylvis also lashed out against the mainstream press for distorting his views and those of the working classes. "Every effort has been made to convince the public," he wrote, that organized labor evinced "hostility to emigration generally. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our only object is to prevent the evils...." Sylvis recounted example after example of immigrants being imported on contract to break strikes and lower wages. He denounced "the promoters of this dirty work," and in what would become a guiding principle of the American labor movement for years to come, he stated:

We claim that our country is large enough for all. We care not who comes here. We are ready to give the hand of welcome to our fellows from all parts of the globe, but we are opposed to that kind of emigration that will reduce us and those who come here to starvation.²²

Sylvia was not alone in this view in the 1860s. The Workingman's Advocate, which soon supplanted Fincher's Trade Review as the nation's foremost labor journal, also warned of press distortion of the issue and misunderstanding of working-class sentiments. Workers, the journal stated in 1866,

are not opposed to encouraging immigration. The cause of labor is the same, and when the foreign laborer comes to our shores, he is as much identified with the workingman here as if he had been American born. The evil intended to be guarded against in our opinion, is not immigration in general, but the system on which it is conducted, throwing emigration into the hands of capitalists, who take occasion to have them brought out, when it suits their own convenience and at the very nick of time perhaps that their workingmen are asking for an increase in wages.²³

In her masterful study, American Industry and the European Immigrant, 1860-1885, Charlotte Erickson has argued that imported contract labor actually accounted for very little of the post-war immigration to the United States. Expense, risk, and uncertainty kept employers from resorting to it frequently. Erickson may well be right in her assessment, but she discounts the significance of the threat imported labor held in the minds of American workers. Whether resorted to or not, employers could intimidate workers by the mere threat to import laborers from abroad. That importation was indeed utilized, however rarely, gave credence to their threats--and to workers' fears. Imported contract labor remained a powerful weapon that employers could threaten to unleash at any time. Consequently,

opposition to imported contract labor remained at the top of the working-class agenda.²⁴

On August 20, 1866, sixty-five delegates from local and national unions, trades assemblies, and working-class organizations gathered in Baltimore to found the National Labor Union. Conceived largely by Sylvis and Fincher, the N.L.U. represented the first attempt to form a nationwide working-class organization of all trades. Delegates discussed a range of issues from eight-hour legislation to currency reform to the use of strikes. On the convention's third day they appointed a committee to visit President Johnson in Washington. The committee, composed of fifteen delegates, arrived at the White House on August 25. The President received them cordially, and John Hinchcliffe, spokesman of the American Miners' Association, presented a list of grievances that touched on a variety of items, including eight hours, convict labor, and distribution of public lands. It also touched on imported contract labor. Since manufacturers received a tariff to protect them from imported goods, he argued, workers deserved a ban on contract immigrants to protect them from imported laborers. Workers "desire protection," Hinchcliffe said, "against foreign pauper labor imported against our interests, to reduce the price of labor." Johnson responded politely to the delegation of workers but said nothing in regard to imported labor.²⁵

Continued reports of importation kept the issue on workers' minds. At the second meeting of the National Labor Union the following year, delegates exchanged stories of emigrant company ruses and abuses, and of how the government connived with importers to break strikes. Alexander Scott, a Pittsburgh iron boiler, charged that manufacturers paid the American Consul in Prussia \$10,000 to send 1,000 men to replace striking iron workers. Richard Trevellick, soon to be elected president of the N.L.U., noted "several cases" of importers inducing Europeans to emigrate by promising wages of twelve dollars a month. Hinchcliffe called such agents "a perfect pack of swindlers," and explained: "They deceive the men there, ill treat them on the passage, and cheat them when they arrive there." Delegates blasted American consuls for their complicity in the business, and in a resolution authored by Sylvis, voted to send a representative to Europe to warn foreign workers to steer clear of importers.²⁶

These working-class protests eventually caught the ear of Congress. So did protests from the importers. While labor leaders sought a ban on contract labor, emigrant companies urged stronger federal involvement. Company agents complained about the difficulty of tracking down absconding workers still under contract, and they lobbied for stiffer legislation that would fine and impound the wages of fugitive workers. This way, manufacturers could recover their investments. Congress balked at these

proposals to strengthen the contract labor law of 1864, and emigrant companies turned instead to state governments. The Connecticut legislature, which had chartered the American Emigrant Company in 1863, acceded to their requests, and enacted a law enabling importers to seize future wages of runaway workers until their debts were repaid. The law also permitted out-of-state employers to enforce their contracts in Connecticut courts. With state governments willing to step in, Congress backed off at first, and then began talking of repeal. Some lawmakers had long found the contract labor law distasteful--"more monstrous," said one Senator in 1866, "... than the negro slavery that we have just abolished." To many Americans, the connection of contract labor to slavery created a powerful and frightening image. When Congress passed the law in 1864, no connection to slavery had been made. As Republican Senator Lot Morrill of Maine recalled, it was "passed in the morning hour without attracting much attention, on the idea that it was entirely inoffensive." After Appomattox, however, the political climate changed radically, and Morrill conceded that the contract labor law could "create an apprehension in the public mind that it was another species of slavery...."²⁷

As a result of the Civil War, American attitudes toward slavery underwent a fundamental transformation. Once an accepted if criticized American institution, slavery now

became associated with everything evil: servility, barbarity, despotism, and caste. Slavery came to represent the antithesis of progress as well as of freedom. When the U.S. ratified the Thirteenth Amendment in 1865 abolishing slavery forever--an act considered unthinkable just five years earlier--few Americans, at least in the North, wanted to turn back the clock. If the Civil War meant anything to Americans black or white, it meant the death of slavery and the triumph of freedom. But what did freedom mean? In large part freedom meant free labor: the right to work, to receive fair wages, and to make contracts enforceable in court. Freedom meant owning one's own muscles. On this everyone agreed. But did a man have a right to sign a contract selling his labor cheaply for years at a time to work in a place thousands of miles away when other workers were present to do the job? Herein lay the labor-capital conflict of the post-war era: when did "free labor"--the right to sign a contract--cross the boundary into slavery? Would society allow a person to sell his labor and his freedom for an extended period of time? Would society permit an individual to sell himself into what others considered slavery? After four years of war, one million casualties, and the emancipation of four million slaves the answer was far from simple. The issues of contract labor and slavery would remain inseparable--at least to workers--for years to come.

When the Senate debated repeal of the contract labor law in 1866, Senator Morrill, chairman of the Commerce Committee, stated the matter plainly: "On what principle is it that this Government can enter the business of importing foreign labor?" None, he answered. "The Senate will see at once that it is a novel feature in the transactions of this Government. It smacks so nearly of that trade which was African ... that the committee was astonished that the Senate ever gave it a moment's consideration." Connecting contract labor to the slave trade proved effective, and Morrill called the act of 1864 the most "absurd" legislation he had ever seen. But in urging its repeal, Morrill made a crucial distinction concerning importation. Importing contract labor from abroad, he said, was fine:

I have no objection to that. Any company has a right to import labor as well as anything else; but what have we [the federal government] to do with it? Why should we put our fingers in it? Why should we go to their aid and authorize agents to go all over Europe to import labor...? I submit that it is not a very dignified business for the Government of the United States....

For capitalists and corporations, Morrill argued, importing contract labor was a legitimate practice. Government sponsorship, however, was unseemly. With this vital distinction, Morrill spoke for a small but emerging Republican consensus. Nonetheless, he met resistance from members of his own party and many Democrats as well. Senators George Williams [R-OR], Edwin Morgan [R-NY], and Reverdy Johnson [D-MD] all defended the contract labor law

of 1864. Contract labor, they said, encouraged immigration and protected newcomers from fraud and abuse. When employers possessed a direct financial stake in their workers, they added, they would treat them better. Morrill dismissed such arguments as the cry of the old slaveholder. Senator John Conness [R-CA] went one step further. The "offensive" law of 1864, he said, had transformed the ideals of the nation:

And now the mission that this great Republic is to go upon among the nations of the earth is to hunt up and hunt out the white men, to enable men who want their labor, and can make money and profit and wealth out of it to make contracts with them in their impoverished condition, in their misfortunes, and then use the right arm of the law to compel their execution under the stars and stripes!²⁸

Despite the impassioned rhetoric, the Senate tabled the bill and failed to vote on repeal in 1866. Little action followed in 1867. Growing criticism of rising costs of the bureau of immigration, however, coupled with difficulties of enforcing the law, eventually made Congress more receptive to working-class protests. On March 30, 1868, Congress quietly repealed the contract labor law of 1864, tacking it on to a very lengthy foreign appropriations bill.²⁹ In repealing the law, Congress removed its imprimatur for the importation of contract labor. However, it is important to keep in mind one essential fact: although importation was no longer protected by the federal government, it was still fully legal and enforceable by state and local laws. Imported contract labor remained lawful, legitimate, and

acceptable. Workers would spend the next seventeen years trying to persuade the federal government to outlaw imported contract labor. Along with eight-hour legislation, adamant opposition to foreign contract labor would unify the working classes for years to come. This opposition consistently informed working-class attitudes toward the Chinese. But as the debates at the next convention of the National Labor Union indicated, opposition focused on the nature of immigration not on its nationality.

Delegates to the Labor Congress gathered in New York City on September 21, 1868. They unequivocally denounced "chartered companies" and "private corporations" who "use their franchises to bring the cheap labor of Europe" to the United States. Delegates also condemned state legislatures for protecting such companies and Congress for not outlawing them. Some companies imported workers from much closer than Europe. "Manufacturing firms in Massachusetts," said John LeBarnes, an old Boston abolitionist representing the Industrial Order of the Sun, "have for years had agents in Canada sending men from there to here to be brought into competition with the working people of the factories of their own State." Although the Canadians "interfered with the operatives of the Union here," LeBarnes criticized the manufacturers rather than the immigrants. "The workingmen of Canada," he concluded, "should be brought into unity with our workingmen and these difficulties will be remedied." At

the Congress's conclusion, former president J.C.C. Whaley reiterated Sylvis's earlier observation that mainstream newspapers had formed and perpetuated "a general misunderstanding" of the National Labor Congress's position toward immigration. This "misconstruction" by the press, he said, had distorted the N.L.C.'s platform to people "throughout the country." Trying to rectify the matter, Whaley emphasized that it was not immigrants they opposed but immigrant companies. The National Labor Congress then adjourned for the year. Neither Chinese immigration nor the Burlingame Treaty ratified just two months earlier ever once came up for discussion.³⁰

1869 and the Memphis Convention

Events the following year would transform workers' understanding of Chinese labor and set the stage for the confrontation at North Adams in 1870. The Workingman's Advocate sounded the tocsin on February 6, 1869.

We warn workingmen that a new and dangerous foe looms up in the far west. Already our brothers of the Pacific have to meet it, and just as soon as the Pacific railroad is completed, and trade and travel begins to flow from the east across our continent, these Chinamen will begin to swarm through the rocky mountains, like devouring locusts and spread out over the country this side. Men who can work for a dollar a day ... are a dangerous element in our country. We must not sleep until the foe is upon us, but commence to fight him now.

In the name of the workingmen of our common country, we demand that our government ... forbid another Chinaman to set foot upon our shores.³¹

With this editorial, the Workingman's Advocate kicked off its campaign for Chinese exclusion. After years of disinterest in the subject, what suddenly motivated its editor, Andrew C. Cameron? It was primarily, as he said, the imminent completion of the transcontinental railroad which boded ill for two reasons: thousands of railroad laborers--many of them Chinese--would shortly be thrown out of work; and at the same time, travel from west to east would become fast and cheap. Without immediate and extreme action, Cameron feared, low-paid Chinese workers would flood the nation.

If Cameron's editorial did not alarm workers in the East, direct threats from manufacturers and capitalists surely did. On May 10, 1869, laborers in Utah hammered in the final spike of the transcontinental railroad (after unceremoniously whisking the Chinese away from view as photographers clicked the historic event). The same month, the Knights of St. Crispin conducted a series of strikes in Massachusetts. The convergence of these two events led employers to consider adapting modern methods of transportation to old tactics of strikebreaking. If Crispins persisted in demanding higher wages, threatened Hide and Leather Interest and Industrial Review, the shoe manufacturers' trade journal in May, then employers

can begin gradually filling the places of Crispins with workmen from other countries; French Canadians, French, Swedes, Germans, etc., are always available; and we think, now that the Pacific Railroad is open, that the

appearance of forty or fifty pig-tailed Chinese in one of the New-England shoe factories would begin to open the eyes of the Crispins, and be most effectual in bringing them to their senses.³²

Crispin leader Samuel P. Cummings dismissed the scheme as mean-spirited, anti-social, and unlikely. "The whole drift of this article" in Hide and Leather, he wrote,

... is this: Crowd down your workmen if you can; but if they are strong enough to resist you, then import foreigners and pig-tailed Chinese, to take their places, and starve them into submission. Fortunately, for the good character of the State and the manufacturers [of Massachusetts], there are but few so lost to all sense of decency, as to try such an inhuman policy in these days of progress.

Cummings overestimated the "decency" and "good character" of manufacturers in his state, and badly miscalculated the intentions of manufacturers throughout the country. Within weeks of the railroad's completion came widespread reports of employers forming emigrant agencies and placing orders to import Chinese workers to the East. "Pennsylvania capitalists are talking about putting Chinese laborers into the coal mines," reported the Cincinnati Commercial. "The immediate reason urged is that they never strike or form combinations, and work cheaper." This reasoning seemed contagious. Pennsylvania Representative Daniel J. Morrell, Radical Republican and vice-president of the Emigrant Aid Society, wanted Chinese laborers in his Cambria Iron Works in Johnstown. Manufacturers in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, and New Jersey, the Workingman's Advocate reported, also hoped to bring in Chinese laborers. And in

early July, the New York Times reprinted an article claiming that 45,000 Chinese workers were about to descend on the South.³³

Rumor threatened to become reality when thirty members of the Memphis Chamber of Commerce gathered on June 30 to plan a huge Chinese labor convention. Members discussed the stagnation of business in the region, highlighting the woes of landowners and planters. "Among the number of obstacles in the way of ... prosperity in the South during the past four years," the members concluded, "no other is more keenly felt by the whole community than the want of efficient and reliable labor in agriculture." Since the Civil War white planters faced difficulties disciplining and maintaining a stable black workforce. Blacks demanded both higher wages and greater independence in setting labor conditions. The answer to the South's problems, the Chamber of Commerce believed, lay thousands of miles away in the interior of China. Rather than negotiate with blacks, better to intimidate them by bringing in "the reliable, industrious and patient Chinaman." Louisiana planters had recently experimented with a handful of Chinese laborers imported from Cuba but hardly on the grand scale now envisioned. The meeting resolved that "the best interests of the South require that all legitimate inducements shall be offered at once to encourage the emigration of Chinese laborers, in large numbers, direct from China, to supply the great demand

now existing in the South...." The men at the meeting proposed holding a giant convention to publicize the cause and invited Tye Kim Orr, a Chinese missionary, and Cornelius Koopmanschap, the "great Chinese importer," to attend.³⁴

Two weeks later several hundred delegates representing planters, businessmen, and railroad companies descended on Memphis, Tennessee, for the nation's first Chinese labor convention. From July 13 to 15, they gathered at the Greenlaw Opera House to discuss various schemes of importing Chinese workers to the South. Delegates hailed from Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, South Carolina, Tennessee, and California, and to lend prestige to the gathering, former Tennessee Governor Isham Green Harris presided. To inform the gathering of the virtues of Chinese workers, Tye Kim Orr addressed the convention on the second day. This well-traveled Chinese Christian had preached the gospel in Latin America and established a Chinese colony in British Guiana before settling in Louisiana in 1867. He thus knew firsthand the Chinese religion, character, and work habits--and availability. "Agriculturists," he explained, "can easily be procured through proper agents. They are easily managed, being patient, industrious, docile, tractable, and obedient."³⁵

Tye Kim Orr's description smoothed the way for the next speaker, Cornelius Koopmanschap. This alliteratively-named

San Francisco merchant was one of the more intriguing characters of the Gilded Age. Born in Holland in 1828, he emigrated to California during the Gold Rush and set up a business "importing flour and other provisions." He prospered quickly, established a fleet of clipper ships, and entered the China trade in the mid-1850s. In 1861 he began "bringing over coolie laborers to San Francisco." He later supplied several thousand to Central Pacific directors Chester Crocker and Leland Stanford who put them to work on the transcontinental railroad. Stanford praised Koopmanschap highly, and by 1869 the Dutch immigrant, who claimed to have landed 30,000 Chinese in California, was the nation's best known importer of Chinese workers. With his "little leg-of-mutton whiskers," "round florid face," and "pearl-colored Derby hat," the cigar-chomping Koopmanschap cut a sharp figure and stole the show at Memphis. He offered to import thousands of laborers direct from China at the nominal fee of roughly \$100 a head. The Chinese would eagerly sign contracts, he said, for two years, five years, even eight years. Their wages could be as low as eight to twelve dollars a month--roughly 35 cents a day.³⁶

Koopmanschap's schemes fired Southern imaginations. The convention immediately made plans to organize the Mississippi Valley Immigration Labor Company with the aim of "bringing into the country the largest number of Chinese agricultural laborers in the shortest possible time." The

convention proposed capitalizing the company at \$1 million. Forty thousand dollars, the New York Tribune reported, was "subscribed on the spot." Delegates appointed a committee "to select a reliable agent" to go to China, bring back 500 to 1,000 immigrants, and distribute them throughout the South "to test their capacities and fitness for the labor required." The scheme seemed possible, and delegates approved the final report:

Two facts are patent--China has the labor that we need, and it can be procured to an unlimited extent. When the supply of this labor becomes a business, competition will of course spring up, and the expense of procuring it will be reduced to a minimum which must fall far below the expenses incident to our present labor system....³⁷

Delegates left Memphis flush with optimism, envisioning the day when plantations, railroads, and infant industries throughout the South would be manned by contented, low-priced Chinese laborers. As soon as the convention closed, Koopmanschap left for New York and found that Northerners too welcomed the prospect of millions of Chinese becoming "the hewers of wood and drawers of water." The New York Sun looked forward to the Chinese filling menial jobs everywhere in the nation's swamps, mines, prairies, vineyards, railroads, and factories. The Times, echoing prominent Republicans throughout the North, opposed any schemes resembling slavery, but liked the fact that the Chinese worked cheap. After all, the Times noted, "the class of labor which the coolies performed is not intended for

epicures to support themselves upon. At all events, we incline to think that repressive laws against the influx of cheap labor would be hostile to the spirit of our institutions as they would be impracticable and unavailing."³⁸

Prospects for a booming "coolie" trade seemed boundless until Treasury Secretary George S. Boutwell noted one small hitch. Importing "coolies" was illegal. In a letter to the New Orleans Collector of Customs on July 23, Boutwell informed the customs agent of a law passed by Congress in 1862. This law, entitled "An Act to Prohibit the 'Coolie Trade' by American Citizens in American Vessels," stated that

no citizen or citizens of the United States, or foreigner coming into or residing within the same, shall, for himself or for any other person whatsoever, ... build, equip, load, or otherwise prepare, any ship or vessel ... for the purpose of procuring from China ... inhabitants or subjects of China, known as "coolies," to be transported to any foreign country, port, or place whatever, to be disposed of, or sold, or transferred, for any term of years or for any time whatever, as servants or apprentices, or to be held to service or labor.³⁹

Representative Thomas Dawes Eliot, from the whaling town of New Bedford, Massachusetts, had drafted the law during the Civil War in the wake of numerous atrocities committed aboard U.S. ships carrying Chinese "coolies" to Cuba.⁴⁰ On its face, the law seemed to clearly outlaw the importation of Chinese workers. As advocates of imported labor soon realized, however, the law as written contained

numerous loopholes. While it effectively prevented transporting "coolies" to foreign nations or places, it did not technically forbid transporting them to the United States. Nor did it forbid transporting "coolies" by rail once they had arrived in another country--say Canada or Mexico--by other means. Most importantly, the law never defined "coolie." What, indeed, was a "coolie"? The term derives from the ancient word "kuli" of Urdu-Hindustani origins, meaning "hire" or "hireling." Webster's Dictionary considered it a new term in the 1840s and defined it simply as an "East Indian porter or carrier," a definition the dictionary would maintain for many years. Colloquially, however, "coolies" referred not just to Indian but to Chinese laborers, especially those transported in heavy numbers from Asia to Latin America during the nineteenth century to grow sugar, coffee, and other crops on large plantations. Many of these Chinese "coolies" signed long-term contracts for low wages to work halfway around the world. As Persia Crawford Campbell relates, speculators often hired "coolie brokers" to recruit impoverished and illiterate Chinese men and induce them to sign contracts. Speculators then transported them on a grueling "middle passage" (under conditions approaching the African slave trade) to Peru and Cuba, and sold their contracts to the highest bidder. Were these "coolies" free men who voluntarily signed contracts or were they unfree men bound

to service? The answer depended more on one's politics than one's dictionary. In 1856 U.S. Commissioner to China Peter Parker called them "almost slaves" and urged legislation outlawing the "coolie traffic." But were all Chinese who signed contracts "coolies" and "almost slaves"? Could a poverty-stricken Chinese man sign a contract and not be a coolie? Possibly, probably, but no one knew for sure. The vagueness of the language thus robbed the "anti-Coolie" law of 1862 of most of its value. Although Americans who opposed the importation of Chinese frequently cited the law, it was virtually a dead letter from the day it passed.⁴¹

Despite these limitations, the law did cause concern after the Memphis Convention. Upon seeing Boutwell's letter reprinted in the New Orleans Picayune, John Williams, a leading Louisiana businessman who had attended the convention, hired a law firm to investigate the legality of importation. The firm concluded that the law referred "to an existing trade" in 1862 rather than the type that the convention had just proposed. The firm also noted that the law lacked precision and that nothing in it prevented signing Chinese to labor contracts. This interpretation satisfied Williams and fellow importers. The New York Times took a somewhat different approach. Conceding the illegality of the coolie trade but intoxicated by visions of China providing "untold millions" of laborers for the U.S., the Times urged Congress to repeal the law if demand for

coolies rose. Barring that, the Times suggested ways that Koopmanschap could evade the law and still supply the nation with Chinese workers.⁴²

The widespread publicity generated by the Memphis Convention ignited a chain reaction of interest in importing Chinese laborers. Southerners flooded Koopmanschap and George W. Gift, the man hired by the convention to go to China, with requests for laborers. Some planters ordered them to be house servants while others wanted them to work their plantations. Ex-Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest, president of the New Selma, Marion and Memphis Railroad (and Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan), subscribed \$5,000 to procure a thousand workers from China to lay track across Tennessee. Northerners and Midwesterners also jumped into the act. Manufacturers from both Ohio and St. Louis placed orders for Chinese workers, and Chicago businessmen invited two Chinese merchants to their city to discuss commercial ventures involving the importation of goods and laborers. The merchants Choy Chew and Sing Man accepted and also visited cities further east in July and August. These grandiose schemes excited entrepreneurs everywhere and raised speculation to a global level. The New York Times reported that with rising interest in the Northeast, Koopmanschap "will employ all available vessels, and his agents in China will be prepared to fill them with human freight as fast as they arrive." And General Hiram

Walbridge, meanwhile, began planning a new fleet of steamships built expressly to import "coolies" from China by way of the almost-completed Suez Canal. A more immediate threat came in August when an Omaha bridge contractor, fed up with recent strikes, suspended work and "determined to secure coolie or Chinese labor." Such labor would not be difficult to find. That summer, the St. Louis Republican carried the following advertisement:

CHINESE LABORERS--Parties wishing to employ large or small numbers of CHINESE LABORERS, may make the necessary arrangements for procuring gangs of the size required, delivered in any part of the country, by application to

KOOPMANSHCAAP [sic] & Co.
San Francisco, California.⁴³

An American could scarcely pick up a newspaper in the summer of 1869 without reading about some new plan to import Chinese workers. They were coming South, they were coming North. They were coming to work on plantations and on railroads, in households and in factories. They were coming to replace blacks, they were coming to replace whites, and they were coming to break strikes. Labor reformer Robert W. Hume of Astoria, New York, placed the working classes on alert:

You sturdy tillers of the soil,
Prepare to leave full soon;
For when John Chinaman comes in
You'll find there is no room.
Like an Egyptian locust plague,
Or like an eastern blight,
He'll swarm you out of all your fields,
And seize them as his right.
Let the mechanics pack his traps,
And ready make to flit;

He cannot live on rats and mice,
And so he needs must quit.

The importation of vast numbers of laborers would undercut everything Union soldiers had fought and died for:

At the full cost of bloody war,
We've garnered in a race;
One set of serfs of late we've freed,
Another takes its place.
Come friends, we'll have to leave this land
To nobles and to slaves;
For, if John Chinaman comes in,
For us--there's only graves.

The connection to slavery remained central to working-class opposition to imported labor. As one critic quipped, "Koopmanschaap--Koop-man-up it ought to be."⁴⁴

Whether in verse or in pun, workers remained deadly serious in opposing schemes of importing Chinese workers. Labor poet Robert W. Hume went even further. A lawyer and former abolitionist who also wrote for the National Anti-Slavery Standard, Hume embarked on a one-man campaign in the pages of the Workingman's Advocate to persuade American workers to endorse Chinese exclusion. Pro-exclusion editor Andrew C. Cameron happily printed Hume's torrent of abusive, racist letters. "We have no need of Chinese," Hume wrote. He is "dirty and beastly ... almost always a coward, generally a liar, and a most confirmed idolater." Workingmen, he said, must unite to "shut our ports to the Celestials."⁴⁵ Yet, Hume's campaign failed to catch fire. Despite encouragement from Cameron, the labor journal received little support from its readers. A few echoed

Hume's anti-Chinese epithets but called only for a ban on importation not immigration.⁴⁶

Some readers boldly defended the Chinese. "We have in our nation American, European and African," wrote George Prindle of McGregor, Iowa, in July. "Let Asia come also.... It becomes us as workingmen and women demanding our rights ... to see to it that we lay not the hand of oppression upon man, woman or child, whether Asia, Africa, Europe or America gave them birth. If we war against emigration, what less do we do than fight God and destiny?" Prindle dismissed cultural and personal differences between Chinese and Americans. "Does he eat rats? We eat hogs. Are his vices bestial? Yes, and worse. But are ours less so? No!" Prindle also dismissed the cheap labor argument. "Have the Chinese lowered wages? So have the Germans and the women yet the Germans saved Missouri in the late rebellion of the slaveholders, and they and the women, together with the Asiatic, will yet save the cause of labor reform in the coming rebellion of the capitalists." This powerful vision of working-class solidarity challenging "slaveholders" and "capitalists" alike would unite many American workers for years to come. As "Zerob," another subscriber to the Advocate, added in August, "let all working men be united ... [and] the influx of people from China, Ireland and Germany will then bless the nation."⁴⁷

Even with threats of Chinese importation appearing almost daily, the first brief stabs at a campaign to restrict Chinese immigration fell flat among the working classes. After Wendell Phillips spoke before the New England Labor Reform League and urged giving Chinese immigrants the ballot, the Workingman's Advocate warned that such action would be a "calamity," but otherwise Phillips's statement caused no uproar. Chinese immigration stirred little excitement among rank-and-file workers. Labor leaders acknowledged as much when they gathered in Philadelphia on August 16 for the fourth National Labor Congress. Chinese immigration came up for discussion for the first time in the Congress's history. "The recent attempts of unprincipled and interested parties to revive the infamous Coolie trade, which is, essentially, a revival of the slave system," declared acting president Henry Lucker, a New York tailor, in his introductory address, "is one which demands our earnest and serious consideration. It is a question that effects all classes of society. While we do not wish to array ourselves against legitimate or voluntary emigration, it must not be forgotten that there is a vast difference in the status of the voluntary emigrant and the imported coolie."⁴⁸

Lucker had stated the nub of the matter: importation and immigration were two vitally different questions. During the week-long proceedings California delegates

lobbied heavily to swing the convention against Chinese immigration. They met with no success. Even Cameron, who chaired the "Committee on Coolie Labor," could not persuade fellow delegates to oppose Chinese immigration. The Committee offered three resolutions to the Congress. The first stated that "while we appreciate the benefits to be desired from voluntary emigration, we are opposed in toto to the importation of a servile race, bound to fulfill contracts entered into on foreign soil." The second resolution demanded "rigid enforcement" of the anti-coolie act of 1862. And the third stated that "voluntary Chinese emigrants ought to enjoy the protection of the laws like other citizens." The convention urged reconsideration of the three resolutions, and added three new members to the committee, including the extreme anti-Chinese Californian Albert M. Winn and Crispin leader Samuel P. Cummings. The committee wrangled for another day and, in a compromise, modified their recommendations. They dropped the last two resolutions entirely. Only the first remained but the committee eliminated the reference to immigration. The resolution read simply: "we are unalterably opposed to the importation of a servile race, for the sole and only purpose of tampering with the labor of the American workingmen." The resolutions were thus streamlined but their essence left intact. Only importation was condemned. The Congress approved. A glum Robert Hume chastised delegates for

refusing to denounce Chinese immigrants. "Our Labor Congress was not willing to sanction this course," he wrote in August. "Many good men, indeed, advocate their coming...."⁴⁹

Many "good men" in the labor movement would continue to advocate the coming of Chinese immigrants. What American workers opposed, and had opposed for years, was the importation of immigrants on contract, whether from Europe, Canada, or Asia. Events during the summer of 1869--the Memphis Convention, Koopmanschap's appeals, and the barrage of threats to procure workers directly from China--linked inextricably the issues of Chinese immigration and imported contract labor. Even amid this steady barrage of threats, however, from planters, from manufacturers, from merchants, and from the press, the working classes carefully and consciously drew a distinct line between immigration and importation, welcoming one, opposing the other. The working classes, however, had not really been tested. Despite all the rumors and reports, 1869 had only been a year of words and threats. Nothing had actually happened. Would workers change their position when suddenly faced with "the appearance of forty or fifty pig-tailed Chinese" in their midst? Would efforts "to import Chinese Coolies," as a reporter at the National Labor Congress warned, "bring about revolutionary disturbances in the East"?⁵⁰ The showdown was not far off. Within a year, Calvin T. Sampson of North

Adams, Massachusetts, would carry through on the threat issued in Hide and Leather and import Chinese laborers to New England. Labor and capital would soon go head to head in a battle for power, control, and a vision of American ideals.

Stirrings in Congress

Before this confrontation took place, however, Congress tried to solve the problem. Many Republicans in Washington still smarted from the connections people made between importation and slavery; a handful of Westerners, meanwhile, now had a new agenda of their own. On December 6, 1869, Senator George H. Williams [R-OR] introduced a bill "to regulate the immigration of Chinese into the United States." A week later Senator Henry Wilson [R-MA] introduced a bill "to regulate the importation of immigrants under labor contracts." Despite the difference in wording, both bills focused on importation and contract labor. Williams's bill specifically stated: "That this act shall not be construed to deny to Chinamen free from any contract or obligation of service the right of voluntary immigration into the United States." Radical Republicans Jacob M. Howard [R-MI] and Samuel C. Pomeroy [R-KS] objected to the bill because it discriminated against the Chinese and threatened to hinder their immigration. Howard also objected to the bill because it prohibited Chinese from signing contracts to emigrate to

the United States. Such contracts, he said, should be legal and inviolable.⁵¹

Senator William M. Stewart [R-NV] became the chief defender of Williams's bill. Born in Wayne County, New York, in 1825, Stewart had been inspired as a young man by the oratory of anti-slavery Congressman Joshua Giddings. He later studied law, went west during the Gold Rush, and made a fortune litigating the Comstock Lode. Nevada elected him as its first Senator in 1864. Once in Washington, Stewart became good friends with Thaddeus Stevens, his next-door neighbor, and the two men frequently spent evenings together playing cards. A third hand often found at the table was Mark Twain whom Stewart hired as his secretary while the impoverished author struggled to finish his first book, The Innocents Abroad. As a Senator, Stewart supported the Civil Rights Bill of 1866 and strongly urged Johnson's impeachment two years later. In 1869 he helped draft and steer the Fifteenth Amendment through the Senate and then used all his leverage to make Nevada the first state to ratify. Perhaps most important, Stewart took pride in claiming to be the first person to introduce Chinese testimony in a court of law, and for years he had defended civil and legal rights (although not suffrage) for Chinese immigrants. He staunchly opposed importation and stressed repeatedly that nothing in the present bill would impede Chinese immigration. "I do not apprehend there is any danger in

that direction," he said. He attacked California's five-dollar head-tax on incoming Chinese immigrants as "unfair" and "discriminating." The U.S., he stated, "should prohibit by suitable laws the importation of coolies and should discourage anything that tends to interfere with the free will of that people in coming and going."⁵²

Both Williams's and Wilson's bills remained bottled in committee for months. On June 6, 1870, Senator Stewart introduced a new version he hoped would satisfy both sides. This bill would "prohibit contracts for servile labor" for more than six months from "any foreign country." By allowing contract labor for a brief period, Stewart aimed to please Republicans who defended the right to import workers from abroad. But he also hoped that such a short time frame would make imported labor unprofitable to employers and thereby "break up that odious contract system." By directing the legislation at imported Chinese but not specifying the Chinese in the bill, Stewart hoped to please both Radicals and workers. Without debate, the Senate remanded the bill to committee.⁵³

Debate in the house reached a much more heated pitch. Representative Aaron A. Sargent [R-CA] introduced a similar anti-contract labor law the same day as Stewart, but unlike the Nevada Senator, he accompanied it with a vitriolic attack on the Chinese people. "Here are swarming millions of men," he said, "alien not alone to our blood and our

language, but to our faith. They are idol worshipers ... attached to imperial institutions." Sargent enumerated many of these Chinese "vices" and "deformities of character," noting they "live upon a lower plane ... in the filthiest, meanest hovels, in unutterable stench." Other West Coast Representatives backed him up. The Chinese, said Thomas Fitch [R-NV], have no "self-respect ... ambition ... [or] love of liberty. They are willing slaves ... imperialists ... [and] polygamists." Fitch called them "a corrupt people ... destitute of all moral principle," and remarked on both their "bestiality of social life" and "wretchedness of existence." They "do not know," he said, "what the word 'freedom' means." He urged legislation to "legally and effectively stay the further influx of Chinese immigration." Samuel B. Axtell [D-CA] concurred, noting the Chinese were "pagans" unfit for United States citizenship. The house sent Sargent's bill to committee.⁵⁴

In the Senate, Stewart made one more effort on June 17 to pass his bill only to find opposition from a fellow Westerner, Senator Eugene Casserly [D-CA]. Echoing his colleagues in the House, Casserly attacked the Chinese on racial and cultural grounds. He also stated that Stewart's bill "totally failed" to solve the problem because it did not concentrate on the Chinese. Casserly urged both further debate on the issue and returning to the bill introduced by Williams. Stewart objected, defending his own version as

more comprehensive. "In the first place," the Nevada Republican said, "I would rather have the law general as to all foreigners, and not make any distinction." He also defended his bill as stronger because it imposed a much greater fine and authorized a \$500 reward to any informer uncovering such contracts. This would provide special inducement, he said, to report transgressions of the law. Stewart reiterated his stance on open immigration a week later. "Let all come from any part of the world who choose to come voluntarily," he said, "but do not allow them to come in under servile labor contracts [i.e., contracts longer than six months]." Charles Sumner [R-MA] endorsed Stewart's bill as did several other Republicans. But they also agreed to Casserly's request for delay and postponed the issue until the next month. Thus by mid-year, the Senate and House had both failed to take action on the importation of contract labor. This left matters for others to decide. As the last days of spring approached in 1870, the nation's attention swiftly shifted from the halls of Congress to the streets of North Adams, Massachusetts.⁵⁵

The Immediate Response to North Adams

Nestled in the Berkshires in the northwest corner of Massachusetts lay the industrial town of North Adams. Its thirty-eight factories produced everything from textiles to paper to heavy iron machinery. They also produced shoes,

more than one million pairs per year. The town's leading shoe manufacturer, Calvin T. Sampson, had begun peddling shoes in 1852. He later opened his own business, and specialized in ladies' and children's boots. By 1870 his Model Shoe Factory had expanded to thirty-five sewing machines and three pegging machines--all driven by a 20-horsepower engine--which could process three tons of leather a week. The factory was one of "the business successes of this village," the local newspaper boasted, "surpassed by few in the State...." A self-made entrepreneur, Sampson employed 150 workers, many of whom belonged to the Knights of St. Crispin. This shoemakers' organization was one of the biggest unions in the country. Numbering roughly 40,000, its membership was mainly composed of native Americans, Irish, and French Canadians, or as the Springfield Republican put it, the "foreign element." Few unions received such universal scorn in the mainstream press as the Knights of St. Crispin. The Republican called it the "most domineering of trades-unions," while the Northampton Free Press claimed it was run by a "set of donkeys."⁵⁶

Sampson would have agreed. His relations with the Crispins had been rocky for years and several times he had attempted to import outside laborers to break strikes. In 1868 he sent his superintendent George W. Chase to Maine and a foreman as far as Canada to recruit non-Crispin workers. The workers arrived but soon joined the union and forced

Sampson to hire back some of the strikers. The Crispins struck again in January 1870 and relations remained tense throughout the spring. Sampson claimed that shoddy workmanship by the Crispins had hurt sales, and in April he announced a ten percent wage cut until business improved. The Crispins objected, drew up a set of demands which included an eight-hour day and the right to examine company records, and voted to strike. In response, Sampson sent superintendent Chase to nearby North Brookfield to secure new Crispins to replace the striking workmen. When these Crispins arrived, the striking Crispins met them at the station and alerted them to the situation. Loyal to their union, the North Brookfield men refused to work and charged Sampson with double-crossing them. The manufacturer tried to negotiate and offered them a higher wage. The Crispins wouldn't budge. "Act your own pleasure," an exasperated Sampson claimed to have responded. "I have made my last proposition, and shall do no more." Gazing at the recalcitrant Crispins the Yankee manufacturer declared: "I shall ... enter a wedge that will destroy your order in five years...."⁵⁷

Sampson then returned to his office. He instructed Chase, his superintendent (who was also his father-in-law), to board the afternoon train for San Francisco and return with seventy-five Chinese workers. "If he could not get men experienced in making shoes," Sampson later recalled telling

him, "he was to engage those who had a natural turn for mechanism." Chase left promptly and arrived in San Francisco in mid-May. He went first to Koopmanschap but found his workers unqualified. (Sampson, interestingly, had told him to avoid Koopmanschap "as the Chinamen secured through him were nothing more than servile laborers.") Chase then visited a shoe manufacturer named W.W. Battles who employed Chinese workers, and Battles referred him to a Chinese emigrant agency named Kwong, Chong, Wing and Company. Carrying letters of credit, Chase met with Ah Young, a partner in the company. "They are very particular where they send their men," Chase later informed Sampson. "They mean to be sure, if they bind them out, that their people are going to get their pay and be treated well." Ah Young spent two days investigating Sampson's background and at last told Chase: "We will furnish you the men."⁵⁸

Chase and Young signed a three-year contract on May 26. The company agreed to provide "75 steady, active, and intelligent Chinamen" who would work eleven hours per day in the spring and summer, and ten and a half hours in the fall and winter. Sampson would pay them \$23 a month for the first year, and \$26 a month for the second and third years. (Striking Crispins received roughly \$72 a month.) Sampson would deduct \$25 from each worker's pay check over the first six months "as a security ... against a man's leaving before his time expires." Sampson agreed to pay traveling expenses

from San Francisco to North Adams, "and if men work satisfactorily for three years or more they are to have a free passage back." The group would include one foreman, two cooks, and seventy-two laborers. The contract, Sampson noted, "was not made with the men personally, but was signed with Kwong, Chong, Wing & Co." He paid the emigrant agency one dollar per man for their services.⁵⁹

On the afternoon of June 1, the seventy-five Chinese gathered at the ferry landing in San Francisco and crossed the bay to Oakland. Carrying a bedroll and blanket attached to a bamboo pole, as well as a few other personal possessions, each boarded the train for the East Coast. The thirteen-day journey would carry them 3,000 miles, to a place half-way around the world from their native land. Very little is known about this intrepid group of early Chinese immigrants. Charley Sing, the foreman, had been in the U.S. for several years and spoke English fairly well. At age 22 he was one of the oldest in the group. Seven were as young as 14 and most were between 15 and 18. All but eight of the 75 Chinese were under twenty years old.⁶⁰ One wonders if any of these youthful Chinese immigrants understood the significance of their eastward journey or had any idea of the uproar their arrival in New England would cause.

As word of Sampson's scheme leaked out, the Workingman's Advocate stepped up the pace of its year-long

campaign to rouse workers against Chinese immigration.

"Disguise it as we may," Cameron wrote on June 11, "the time has come when the protest of the American workmen against the further introduction upon American soil of the beastly, idolatrous Mongolian race, must be heard; must say to their Legislators, thus far shalt thou come and no further, except at your peril." Cameron squarely blamed the coming of the Chinese on the absence of protest from the working classes. He compared their misguided complacency to that of irresponsible "authorities, who, indifferent to the ravages of an epidemic in a neighboring city, waited for its appearance in their midst, before paying attention...." With the issue at last forced, Eastern workers could wait no longer. "They now must face the music...."⁶¹

Eastern workers responded swiftly and strongly to the Chinese but not in the way Cameron had hoped. With anti-labor newspapers, such as the preeminent Springfield Republican, circulating rumors of impending Crispin violence, Sampson took special precautions to insure the newcomers' safety. He hired extra policemen, armed himself and the Chinese, and turned his factory, according to the Republican, into "a fortified penitentiary." Such fears were inflated. Hundreds of Crispins and fellow workers watched peacefully as the seventy-five Chinese immigrants disembarked from the four-o'clock train in North Adams on June 13. A few "hoots" and "taunting shouts" filled the

air, the Boston Advertiser reported, but "no general attack was made.... The Chinese were quite imperturbable, and did not even mind the appellations of wrath yelled into their ears from the wayside." The Republican noted that the Crispins directed their "vociferous ... abuse" not at the Chinese but at Sampson. All told, the Republican conceded, the Crispins, "though out in full force ... behaved very well." Other journals also stressed the Crispin restraint and even blamed the rock-throwing incident on rowdy boys. Thirty minutes after disembarking from the train, the Chinese arrived safely in Sampson's factory and began unpacking their belongings. "The curious crockery and cooking utensils, counting machines, chop sticks, and other baggage which the strangers have brought with them, and their novel costumes," the Advertiser noted the next day, "are scrutinized with much interest, but the new comers themselves are treated with perfect respect and have such kind treatment as probably no Chinaman ever received on American soil before." The Chinese spent the next day acclimating themselves and began work on June 15. ⁶²

Workers throughout the Northeast and Midwest mobilized at once. In town after town they held "grand mass meetings" of protest and indignation. "This new system of slavery has begun," railed iron molder Dugald Campbell on June 15 to a large gathering of workers in Troy, New York.

This is but the opening wedge. The capitalists have started the ball rolling and will keep it rolling over

the continent if active measures to impede its progress are not at once taken by the workingmen. If we permit these Chinamen to be used by monopolists as they see fit, to degrade the workingmen of America, there will be anarchy and disorder in the land....

Alexander Troup, secretary of the National Typographical Union and a vice-president of the N.L.U., spoke next. "We have abolished the slavery of the black men," he said, "but these capitalists are endeavoring to resurrect it. The workingmen throughout the country should rise in a body and raise such a shout that its echo will reach Washington." Troup urged passage of Stewart's bill in the Senate. If enacted, a resolution adopted by the meeting stated, the bill would "make the importation of emigrants under labor contracts unlawful." The meeting's first resolution captured the essence of the working-class protest:

we are inflexibly opposed to all attempts on the part of capitalists to cheapen and degrade American labor by the introduction of a servile class of laborers from China or elsewhere; while we at the same time, heartily welcome all voluntary emigrants from every clime, and pledge them our sympathy and encouragement in efforts to secure for themselves and their children homes on American soil.

These early speeches and resolutions set the tone for other working-class meetings across the country.⁶³

One week later, 3,000 to 4,000 workers from the Berkshire region gathered in North Adams for a mass meeting "in the open air." Hundreds of Crispins attended, the New York Herald reported, "and also their sympathizers employed in the woollen and cotton factories." Crispin leader Samuel P. Cummings spoke to an enthusiastic audience. Sampson, he

declared, had imported Chinese workers "not to strike against the labor of North Adams alone, but to see if the experiment of Chinese labor can be carried out, and if it can, to strike against the laboring classes of the whole country." Speaking "from a rustic stand hastily improvised" for the occasion, Cummings lashed out against the importation of contract labor and attacked Republican Senators for not passing the bill in Congress. Cummings did not attack the Chinese. In fact, he urged organizing them into the Knights of St. Crispin. He praised them as good workers and able competitors and even "eulogized John Chinaman as a gentleman far superior to Mr. Sampson." Spurred on by cries of "hear, hear," Cummings recoiled at having "to mention Sampson's name, but he did not wish to pollute his lips with it any oftener than possible, for it was such men as him who were their enemies, and whom they must protect themselves against." By rebuking the importer and not the imported, Cummings pinpointed the target of working-class anger. Workers must oppose importation, he counseled, but "to all men of whatever race and color ... they should extend a hearty welcome."⁶⁴

The working-class crowd responded favorably. They cheered Cummings and uttered "loud groans for Sampson." North Adams workers evinced little hostility toward the Chinese, either collectively at the meeting or separately in quieter moments. In interviews later conducted by officials

of the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor seven North Adams shoemakers--at least three of whom were Crispins--gave their views on the event that had put their town on the map. Not a single one of them voiced any antipathy toward the Chinese themselves. "I thought Mr. Sampson had the right to get the Chinese if he wanted," said Oliver A. Brown, a non-Crispin shoemaker, "and I had no disposition to interfere." Other shoemakers were more critical of Sampson and his tactics, but none attacked the Chinese. Alfred L. Wood, presiding officer of the local Crispin lodge, struck a conciliatory note: "Since the Chinese have been at work, no violence has been used upon them by shoemakers or Crispins, to my knowledge. The general feeling among the Crispins is to let the experiment be tried without molestation." When debating the issue, North Adams workers focused on the nature of the laborers--imported on contract--rather than on their nationality. As the Springfield Republican noted, "The general topic of discussion" among workers was not the Chinese but "what the townsfolk call the 'slave question.'" The anti-Crispin Albany Journal conceded as much: "The workingmen of North Adams--the seat of this labor war--have an intelligent appreciation of this question. They discountenance violence, cast no blame on the Chinamen, but advise their enlightenment so that they may comprehend the value of their labor, and co-operate with their fellow-workmen in demanding remunerative wages." An unidentified

local Crispin summed up the general working-class view the most concisely. Just a week after the Chinese laborers had arrived in his town, he confided to a Boston reporter: "'I don't object to their coming here. Let 'em come single-handed, like other emigrants and take their chance. But they come banded together. That isn't right.'"65

Workers beyond the Berkshires took their cue from their brethren in North Adams, but sometimes outright hostility to the Chinese was more apparent. In Boston, racism proved a potent rallying cry. Organizers advertised their meeting by posting throughout the city huge placards of caricatured Chinese immigrants. These placards pictured Chinese men carrying bamboo poles with edible rats and dogs suspended from them by their tails. Similar pictures greeted visitors at the entrance hall of Tremont Temple on June 29. Such icons sometimes influenced the discourse, particularly the rhetoric of one speaker who wanted to "'brand with eternal infamy the man who had introduced rat-eating, dog-broiling Asiatic labor to ... Massachusetts.'" Despite the racism, the speaker focused his hatred on Sampson. So did Jennie Collins, who the New York Herald called "the clever and eloquent little feminine advocate of the rights of labor." "Mr. Sampson," she said, "was to the working men what Judas was to Christianity, and what Jeff Davis was to the freedom of slaves." Speakers cautioned against criticizing the Chinese. N.E. Chase, the meeting's organizer and chairman,

stressed that "the poor Chinamen themselves were not to be blamed" and "urged his hearers not to cherish feelings of jealousy or envy against them personally." Other speakers echoed these sentiments and urged organizing the Chinese. Crispin leader William McLaughlin claimed that "if the Chinese could only read English, they would be converted to Crispins in a month, and they may be converted as it is."⁶⁶

The meeting became fractious when a dispute erupted over whether or not to endorse Senator Henry Wilson. Ermine A. Lane, "Grand Directress" of the Daughters of St. Crispin, objected to any endorsement of the Massachusetts Republican. A Mrs. Warner was "loudly applauded" when she suggested that Wilson was merely hunting for working-class votes. A man in the audience rose and declared Wilson "the tool of capital and nothing better." On Lane's motion, the meeting withdrew Wilson's name and substituted that of Senator Stewart, and then endorsed his bill banning the importation of contract labor. Among a host of other resolutions, Boston workers denounced "all attempts to introduce ... a servile class of laborers from China or elsewhere, who came in fulfillment of contracts made on foreign soil." They condemned "these infamous contracts" and indicted capital for trying to "cheapen labor and degrade the working classes." But Boston workers, like those in Troy and North Adams, agreed to "welcome voluntary laborers from every clime."⁶⁷

Perhaps the most representative of all the working-class meetings took place the next night in Tompkins Square Park in New York City. Local unions chipped in eight dollars apiece to defray the meeting's cost of \$179, and erected three platforms, two for English speakers, one for German speakers. Workers decorated these platforms with American flags and, as newspapers loved to point out, dozens of Chinese lanterns painted red, white, and blue. "Early in the evening the crowd began to assemble," the Tribune noted, "and from all sides of the square they came faster and faster, until, as the hour approached, the noise of their voices became like the rushing of mighty waters." Workers from virtually all the city's trades attended--shoemakers, tailors, bakers, barbers, bricklayers, cigar makers, cigar packers, iron molders, carpenters, stairmakers, painters, plasterers, printers, cabinetmakers--and, as the New York Sun mentioned, "a large number of sympathetic women."⁶⁸

After a display of fireworks, Nelson W. Young, president of the Workingmen's Union, opened the meeting. "'The introduction of Coolie labor is nothing but a speculation to make the rich man richer and the poor man poorer,'" he cried. "'We must protest to the Congress of the United States against this invasion of our rights.'" Nelson called the Chinese question "the most important issue" to face the working classes "in a long time." He

urged peaceful means--"'the ballot box'"--to stop importation.⁶⁹

New York City Mayor A. Oakey Hall spoke next. Greeted with prolonged cheers, he lashed out against "this importation of tawny slaves" and called the Chinese "debased in race, irreligious, and in many respects incapable of free reason." He attacked both the "wicked combination of capitalists" and "man-stealers" who imported the Chinese and the legislators who sanctioned it. The rhetoric flowed thickly and the mere mention of Sampson's name drew hisses and groans. Yet Hall, like all the speakers who would follow him, supported the right of Chinese laborers to come to the United States. Quoting workers in Boston, he said: "'the American people would not and ought not to object to any kind of voluntary immigration into this free country;' and ... if the Chinaman ... desired, like the victim of any other despotism throughout the world, to come to this land to better his fortunes, and come voluntarily, there was perhaps not so much objection to that."⁷⁰

Nearby on the second platform, William Cashman of the Tailors' Union picked up the tempo. "'We will not let the monopolists and capitalists ride over us roughshod,'" he said. "When the struggle for liberty began, the workingmen went to the front, and were then termed good citizens, but now that the question of cheap labor was involved they were no longer considered." The issue was not native versus

newcomer but free versus unfree. "To the Chinaman as an emigrant there are no objections," Cashman declared, "but when they are brought here in masses, and under contract, it was time something should be done." John Ennis of the Plasterers' Union followed Cashman. With lurid imagery, he described the "Gold Room [on Wall Street] as a branch office of hell." He added: "'At one end of Wall Street stands a magnificent temple erected for the worship of the Christian's God, and at the other end, if the Chinese obtain a foothold here, will in ten years be erected a Pagan Temple for the worship of Buhdee and Confucius.'" Still, Ennis added, "we don't object to the Chinese coming if they compete with us as other nationalities have done.'" Speaker after speaker made the identical point. "No one," said bricklayer Richard Matthews, "would be opposed to them as emigrants, working for the average wages given the workingman." As an iron molder named Purdy summed up, workers opposed the importation of contract labor but "extended the right-hand of fellowship to all emigrants no matter what nationality...."⁷¹

Speakers from the German stand delivered the identical message in a different language. "The Chinamen," thundered Adolph Douai, editor of the Arbeiter Union, "had the same right as ourselves to emigrate to this country, but there are too many workingmen here without employment, and this importation of coolie labor is an insult to the

workingmen...." Cigar-maker Conrad Kuhn agreed: "it would be foolish to argue against coolie immigration," he said, "as it would be to oppose German or Irish immigration." German orators took pains to make the same careful distinctions as those speaking in English. The "importation of coolies ... ought to be forbidden," stated cabinetmaker Fred Homrighausen, but "of course," he added, "no opposition could be made against the voluntary immigration of free Chinese to this country...." Unrestricted immigration, he concluded, was a right "no free citizen could oppose."⁷²

Speeches lasted late into the night. The resolutions, read aloud in both English and German, received overwhelming support (in the form of "barbaric yells," said the Springfield Republican) and echoed the resolutions passed in other cities during the previous two weeks. They assailed Congress for allowing manufacturers to bring in "servile labor from foreign shores." They condemned "[a]ny arbitrary system of importation of mechanics, artisans and laborers from any country or clime, or under any pretence whatever." And they denounced as "reprehensible" the "unjust and unholy attempt to covertly revive the slave-trade and reestablish slavery in a country dedicated to human liberty, human progress, and civilization...." But workers refused to close the door to voluntary Chinese immigrants.⁷³

At meeting after meeting throughout the summer of 1870 workers repeated this theme of opposing imported labor while

endorsing voluntary immigration. In July the Iron Molders International Union met for its annual meeting in Philadelphia and adopted the same stand: pro-immigration, anti-importation. So did the Cigar Makers' International Union at its meeting in Syracuse three months later. Black working-class and political organizations, from the Fifteenth Amendment Club in Cincinnati to the National Labor Bureau of Colored Men in Washington, took the identical pro-immigration, anti-importation stance. So did the French-language, New York labor journal, Bulletin de l'union republicaine de langue francaise. Workers everywhere voiced the same sentiments. In Belleville, Illinois, laborers organized a meeting on July 2 composed largely of miners but including "representatives from every vocation in life." Nearly 300 workers attended and signed a petition to be forwarded to Congress that opposed the importation of Chinese laborers "but welcomes the unbought emigrant." (A second source reported that the petition welcomed the "unbrought" emigrant.) Workers voiced identical sentiments at meetings in Albany, Cincinnati, Chicago, and Kansas. After one such rally in Rochester, a local newspaper commented:

In nearly all the meetings that have been held to protest against such importation, resolutions have been passed welcoming bona fide immigrants to our shores, and holding out to them the hospitable hand. This welcome has been offered not alone by capitalists and employers, but by the laborers who feel the most aggrieved.... It is not laborers and immigrants, but

the importation of mere laboring machines that is objected to.

The Cincinnati Gazette made a similar observation. "Even the demagogues who have mounted this agitation do not propose prohibition [of immigration]," the Gazette noted in July. "The workingmen's meetings ... ask only for a law forbidding labor contracts." The Gazette, a pro-exclusion Republican newspaper, went so far as to ridicule workers for making such a fine distinction between immigration and importation, calling their resolutions "absurd ... impotent" and a "humbug." These comments reflect the gulf of understanding between the Republican press and the working classes.⁷⁴

Perhaps Robert Blissert of New York City put the working-class position best. "I have a horror of Slavery," the German-born tailor informed fellow laborers at a meeting of the Workingmen's Association on July 21. "I believe I am like thousands of my countrymen whose kindred dyed the soil of America with their blood in putting down Slavery in the South. If Slavery should again be established, I am ready that my blood should be shed in Massachusetts or any other State to suppress it there." Importation, he added, "is even more ... destructive" than slavery because "when a man is bought for three years [rather than a lifetime], the employer is bound to wring as much out of the slave as lies in his power, and then he can be cast away as a piece of

useless machinery." It was importation he opposed, not the Chinese.

I have no objection against Chinamen.... [T]he Chinaman is as welcome to me as men from Ireland, or Scotland, or England, or any other man who has sufficient energy to leave the land of his birth and desires to come here and cast his lot with the workingmen. As a workingman I will take his hand and say, 'Come along; we are both laborers, soldiers of the great army of labor. Let us fight the battle side by side.'⁷⁵

John Swinton and the N.L.U.

Throughout the summer--and well beyond--workers remained steadfast in their opposition to imported labor and support for voluntary immigration. What is remarkable about this working-class solidarity is that it came from below, a below never considered, never understood, and barely even acknowledged by previous historians. In local meetings, ringing speeches, spot interviews, and assorted letters, the rank and file along with their immediate leaders clearly stated their opposition to imported Chinese labor. Although occasionally lacing their comments with racism--a racism endemic to every level of American society--workers persisted in welcoming all voluntary immigrants from China and elsewhere to the United States. Historians have at worst ignored and at best dismissed the distinction workers so painstakingly made between immigration and importation. One historian even described this distinction as "tortured reasoning."⁷⁶ Understanding this reasoning, however, in the context of the background undergirding the issue of

importation is vital to understanding working-class attitudes and the origins of the Chinese Exclusion Act. The failure of historians to examine the precise distinctions workers made is truly regrettable. Yet it is also understandable, because rank-and-file attitudes challenged those of national labor "leaders" who claimed to speak for them. Rank-and-file attitudes challenged those of Andrew C. Cameron, editor of the Workingman's Advocate, the nation's foremost labor journal, which since 1869 was a staunch advocate of Chinese exclusion.

Rank-and-file attitudes also challenged those of John Swinton, a former abolitionist and editorial writer for the New York Times. Within days of the North Adams incident, Swinton issued a blistering attack on Chinese immigration.

Suddenly--by a lightning flash, as it were--the Chinese question has become the living question of the hour. It is a question not only for discussion and decision, but for action.

It is a practical question in regard to industry and capital, as well as in regard to civilization, liberty, and morality.

It is a question not only for to-day, but one which, if wrongly settled at this time, will be a disturbing question for ages.

In a full-page letter to the New York Tribune later reprinted as a sixteen-page pamphlet, Swinton urged an end to Chinese immigration on four grounds: race, industry, politics, and morality. Race took precedence. "The Mongolian blood is a depraved and debased blood," he wrote. "The Mongolian type of humanity is an inferior type.... [C]an we afford to permit the debasement of the American

race-type by intermixture with an inferior race? Can we afford to admit the transfusion into the national veins of a blood more debased than any we have known?" Fearing this new "sort of mongrelism," Swinton cited Mexico and Central America as proof of the dangers of racial mingling. That the Chinese were debased--the word appears six times in his pamphlet--was evident from their morality. "In their indecent and obscene, foul and mortifying vices, they have gone to depths of which the white race is happily ignorant," he wrote. The "lewd Chinese women ... are but little worse," he added (perhaps taking his cue from Charles Francis Adams, Jr.), "than the ship-loads of incestuous and Sodomite Chinese men." Such immorality prevented participation in the affairs of government. "The Chinese are an unpolitical race," he remarked, accustomed only to "oriental despotism" and absolutism. Thus, if enfranchised, they "will be a tool for demagogues." And coming in large numbers, they would undersell American labor. Unlimited Chinese immigration would "enable ... capitalists to pile up more capital, millionaires to double their millions," and reduce the workingman to poverty and penury. What the "contest between the Chinese and American races" all boiled down to, Swinton charged in one vivid phrase, was "the roast rat against the roast beef."⁷⁷

This language and imagery remained unmatched in the East for years to come. Swinton himself would later emerge

as the nation's foremost labor editor of the 1880s, proprietor of a radical working-class newspaper that bore his name. But in 1870 Swinton stood at a crossroads, poised between pursuits as respectable editorialist and budding labor activist. His anti-Chinese pamphlet served as an ugly and ironic segue into a brilliant career: ugly because of its virulent racism; ironic because workers, for whom it was intended, disapproved of his argument and disregarded his remedy. Swinton's pamphlet, the brashest statement on exclusion yet uttered, convinced few if any members of the working classes. The single positive reference to it at any labor gathering came from New York City Mayor Oakey Hall, who, it may be added, was the only full-time politician to address a working-class meeting that summer.⁷⁸ Genuine labor spokesmen, however, ignored its appearance.

In vying for leadership of the anti-Chinese movement, Cameron and Swinton had more of an impact on the National Labor Union (and future historians) than on workers at large. But even here their impact remained limited. On August 15, 1870, more than eighty delegates gathered in Cincinnati for the fifth National Labor Congress. In his opening address, President Richard Trevellick adhered to the rank-and-file position: he denounced importation but welcomed voluntary Chinese immigration. The five-delegate committee on coolie labor, dominated by Californians, felt otherwise. This committee presented a vaguely-worded anti-

Chinese resolution. Alexander Troup, who had spoken at the first protest meeting in Troy, objected at once. "The distinction between immigration and importation must be clearly stated," he said. San Franciscan W.W. Delaney disagreed and urged the convention to oppose both. "Great confusion followed," a reporter observed. Delegates began yelling at each other and talking out of order. Tempers flared, the reporter noted, and "[t]he gavel fell often, with direful clashing." Delegates at last postponed the question for another session.⁷⁹

When discussion resumed the next day disorder reigned again. A Westerner shouted that "Chinese coolies ought to be driven from the soil of America." Charles Whitney of Chicago seconded this view, remarking, "'if the ballot did not stop this evil the bullet must.'" The president then spoke. Trevellick had traveled the world over and seen Chinese immigrants firsthand in the Pacific islands. He "had never," he said, "heard of one becoming a citizen. The marriage tie was not observed and the most shocking immorality prevailed among them." Crispin leader Charles McLean of Boston dismissed these outrageous comments and "defended the Chinese character." "In many things their customs were worthy of imitation," the Workingman's Advocate reported McLean saying. "He was not in favor of denouncing the poor Chinaman. It was the heartless capitalist and monopolist he denounced." Urging delegates to welcome the

Chinese, McLean stated: "Let them come and become citizens if they would. It was against the spirit of our institutions to forbid voluntary immigration." The peripatetic Samuel P. Cummings seconded McLean's statements and defended both the Chinese and voluntary immigration. So did other delegates from Missouri and Washington, D.C. But the issue continued to divide the convention, and delegates again referred the matter to committee.⁸⁰

In the end, the National Labor Congress failed to make any distinction between immigration and importation. Delegates resolved only that "the presence in our country of Chinese laborers in large numbers is an evil entailing want and its consequent train of misery and clime on all other classes of the American people, and should be prevented by legislation." Historians have long misread this resolution as a full-fledged endorsement of Chinese exclusion. Although indisputably anti-Chinese, the resolution was purposefully ambiguous, a reflection of the National Labor Congress's inability to reach a consensus. Delegates fell short of calling for an end to Chinese immigration, and local observers admitted as much. "The resolutions of the Labor Convention on Chinese emigration exemplify the difficulty of dealing with this question," the Cincinnati Gazette remarked. "The convention is not up to the point of declaring against the free emigration of the Chinese. Either its own moral sense is against this, or it thinks

this will not be supported by the moral sense of the community."⁸¹

The Gazette was on target. The National Labor Congress did not endorse exclusion. The Congress, however, stood out as the only working-class body east of the Rocky Mountains that failed to distinguish clearly between immigration and importation. Trying to mollify delegates from both regions of the country--East and West--the Congress satisfied neither. Its shilly-shallying position suggests that the National Labor Union, now in the throes of launching a new political party, no longer spoke for the majority of the nation's workers. This widening chasm between the N.L.U. hierarchy and their constituents would no doubt contribute to the organization's demise a few years later. Leaders simply failed to speak for workers.

Just like the Workingman's Advocate and Swinton's pamphlet, the National Labor Union had scant impact on working-class attitudes regarding the Chinese. In contrast to the Advocate and Swinton, workers supported Chinese immigration, and unlike the N.L.U., they stated their views clearly. Local labor leaders recognized these differences and tailored their statements accordingly. By 1870, statewide chapters of the N.L.U. had entered the political arena and begun running candidates for office. These chapters listened more closely to their constituents below than to their leaders above. Massachusetts, the state most

immediately affected by Chinese labor, presents a prime example. In the final working-class meeting of the summer to deal with the Chinese issue, delegates gathered in Worcester on September 8 to write a platform and nominate candidates for the Massachusetts Labor Reform party. In speech after speech workers attacked capital for "the nefarious project" of importing labor. Paranoia gripped the convention. "It belongs to you, gentlemen," said Charles Cowley, president of the meeting, "as representatives of the class thus menaced with social extinction, to erect an impenetrable barrier of law against these invading hordes of Chinese--ten times more to be dreaded than those ancient Huns and Vandals who overran Rome under Attila and Genseric."⁸²

Despite such diatribes, delegates held firm. Led by the indefatigable Samuel P. Cummings, the convention's chairman, they rejected a resolution that would have condemned Chinese immigration as a "curse." (Such a resolution, Cummings charged, was "wholly indefensible.") Workers then rejected a second resolution that would have declared the immigration of Chinese an act of "piracy." And they rejected a third resolution that would have recommended taxing each incoming Chinese immigrant. Workers remained steadfast, however, in their hatred of contract labor, and in a resolution that did pass they stated: "we are inflexibly opposed to the importation by capitalists of

laborers from China or elsewhere, for the purpose of degrading and cheapening American labor, and will resist it by all the legal and constitutional means in our power." In the same resolution workers agreed to "welcome voluntary emigrants from every clime, and pledge them the protection of our laws and equal opportunity in every field of industry...."⁸³

The convention nominated former abolitionist Wendell Phillips for governor. Phillips, as noted earlier, had incurred the wrath of the Workingman's Advocate in 1869 when he urged enfranchising Chinese immigrants. He incurred its wrath again when he unequivocally stated his views favoring unrestricted immigration but opposing importation. "We welcome every man of every race to our soil and to the protection of our laws," Phillips wrote in July 1870.

Let every oppressed man come. Let every poor man come. Let every man who wishes to change his residence come. We welcome all; frankly acknowledging the principle that every human being has the right to choose his residence just where he pleases on the planet.... The Chinese ... will be a welcome and valuable addition to the mosaic of our Nationality.... But such immigration to be safe and helpful must be spontaneous. It must be the result of individual will obeying the laws of industry and the tendencies of the age. IMMIGRATION OF LABOR IS AN UNMIXED GOOD. IMPORTATION OF HUMAN FREIGHT IS AN UNMITIGATED EVIL.

The Workingman's Advocate denounced Phillips for these statements. Nonetheless, the workingmen of Massachusetts backed Phillips's position on immigration and nominated him for governor. So did their female counterparts, the Massachusetts Association of Working Women. They too backed

Phillips and the Labor Reform platform. Local labor leaders, such as Crispins Samuel P. Cummings and Charles McLean, were evidently more attuned and better in touch with the concerns and demands of local workers. Despite pressure from above, the rank and file in Massachusetts and throughout the Northeast and Midwest remained firm and united in their stance favoring Chinese immigration and opposing importation. This persistent rank-and-file solidarity on the issue and their defiance of both the National Labor Union and the Workingman's Advocate are noteworthy, especially in light of other events during the summer of 1870.⁸⁴

Threats and Rumors

The North Adams incident set off a chain reaction of interest in importing Chinese laborers. Within days of their setting foot in the Berkshires manufacturers descended on North Adams and flooded Sampson with requests for information. An "Oriental wave," as one journal put it, threatened to engulf the nation. The first shipment of 200 Chinese laborers for the South arrived in New Orleans in early June (after a four-month journey from Hong Kong) and a second batch of 141 joined them on July 4. Meanwhile, the owner of the Wills Valley Railroad in Tennessee wired Koopmanschap to send him 1500 Chinese laborers. The Dutch entrepreneur dispatched a shipment in early August and about

1,000 Chinese workers arrived in Alabama and began laying track toward Chattanooga. A month later Koopmanschap claimed that "eastern capitalists" had signed contracts for over 200,000 "coolies" and that he had rejected applications for 60,000 more. Other importers jumped into the act. In August, Julius A. Palmer opened a "Chinese immigration bureau" in Boston to supply workers to Eastern factories and was immediately swamped with orders. A similar agency soon opened in New York City.⁸⁵ For weeks the Sacramento firm of Sisson and Wallace, billing itself as "agents for Chinese labor" with offices throughout California and Nevada, advertised prominently in issue after issue of the Trans-Continental, a brief national newspaper.⁸⁶ Opportunities to procure Chinese workers seemed endless--and a slap at native craftsmen. "FIRST INTRODUCTION OF CHINESE LABOR IN PRINTING," read an advertisement in the New York Sun in July, "And Great Reduction of Prices in consequence." Visionaries foresaw "Asiatic laborers" filling all trades in great numbers. The Sun predicted that employers in Massachusetts alone would import 20,000 more Chinese within the year. They would provide the muscle to build a canal across Cape Cod and finish the famed Hoosac Tunnel in the Berkshires. Railroad directors envisioned a bright and profitable future. Convinced by Sampson's success, they hurriedly placed orders for Chinese workers to lay track in Virginia, West Virginia, and Pennsylvania. By midsummer,

Chinese contract laborers were working from New Orleans to New England, with requests pouring in from all over-- Illinois, St. Louis, Washington, D.C., and as far north as Toronto.⁸⁷

Manufacturers valued the Chinese for their "cheap labor" and alleged docility. They envisioned the Chinese as a potent weapon available to discipline workers, break strikes, and decrease wages. A railroad contractor in upstate New York had trouble attracting laborers "at satisfactory prices," but after he invented a ruse that he had just signed a contract for 1,000 Chinese, local laborers gave in and accepted the lower rate. To employers the Chinese seemed to be the secret weapon they had long dreamed of. The New York Tribune hinted that capitalists could import Chinese workers to intimidate the Irish, while the New York Herald deemed "A General Smashing Up of the Crispins Inevitable." The issue of the day, according to one cartoonist, was "Yan-ki vs. Yan-kee." [See figure 1.2] Many believed that organized labor had finally met its match. "Every manufacturer in the country," the Boston Advertiser observed, "has felt to some extent the influence of trades unions, for which the most powerful enemy has now been discovered." Labor poet Robert W. Hume again picked up his pen to describe the impending state of affairs:

"Hurrah!" cries the Factory King,
"Now I'll screw my hands and make 'em sing!
 'Gainst their Union prate
 I'll shut my gate,
When Chow-Chow's men from China I bring.["]

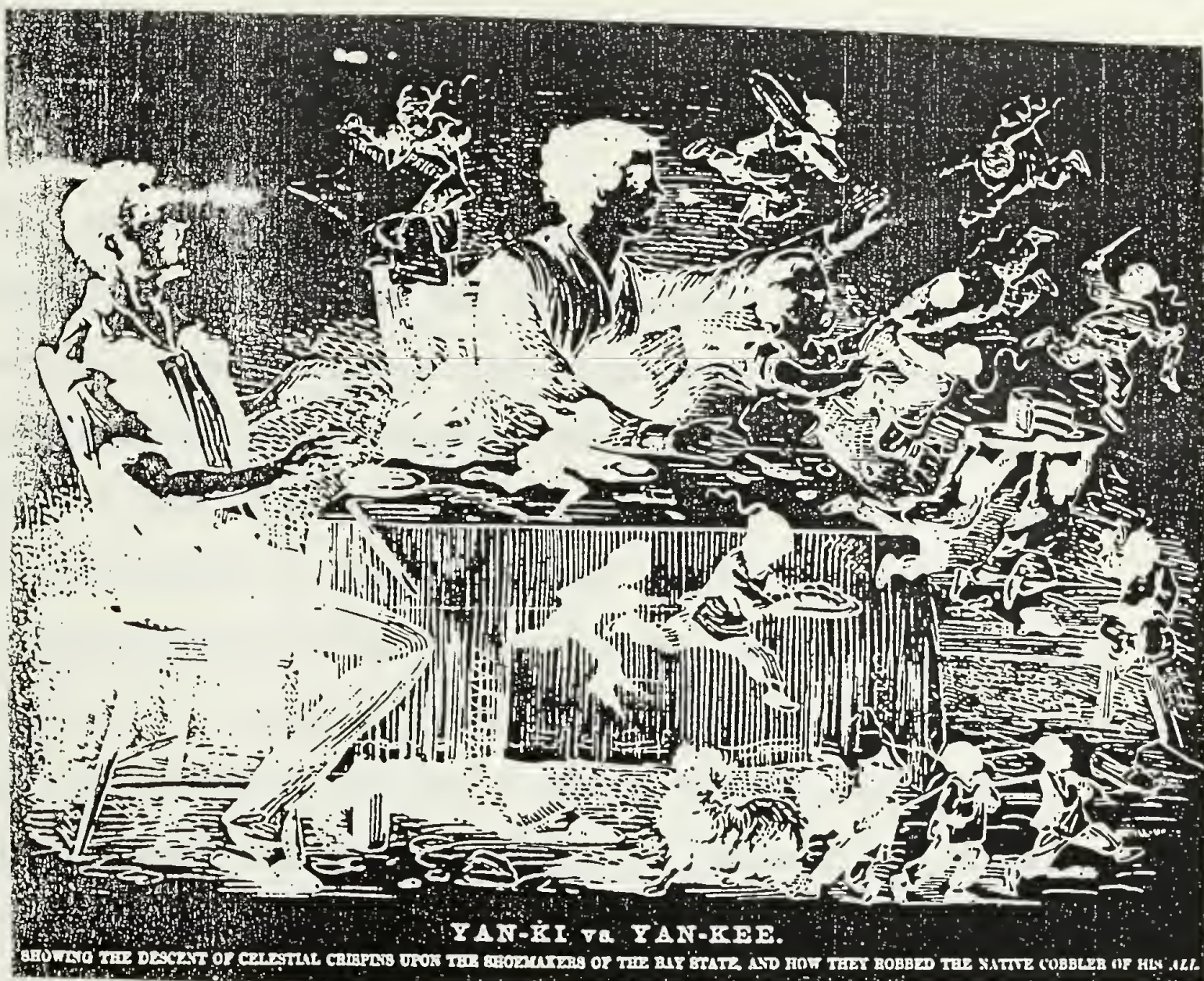


Figure 1.2. Elfin Chinese workers literally take the food from the mouths of an American worker and his family. Such racist portrayals of the North Adams incident made no distinction between immigration and importation. Note the Chinese laborer in the background ripping up a "trade prices" agreement, implying that manufacturers would no longer need to worry about making contracts with union workers.

Source: Punchinello, July 23, 1870.

The poem became a reality in September when manufacturers in Fall River, Massachusetts, broke one of the largest and bitterest strikes in the region's history by threatening to import Chinese laborers.⁸⁸

Many of these threats echoed those from the previous summer. But suddenly the threats were being backed up by action. Sampson's deed gave them substance and other manufacturers threatened to follow in his footsteps. The North Adams incident scared workers to death, and the almost daily barrage of threats fueled working-class anger throughout the summer. Middle-class editors could sit comfortably in their chambers and dismiss the incident as trivial, lacking, in the words of the Springfield Republican, "any real importance." As working-class protest erupted nationwide, the smug E.L. Godkin, editor of The Nation, could write that "it is borrowing trouble for any of us to be worrying ourselves too much...." Workers, however, felt otherwise. Their livelihood--not that of the middle classes--was at stake, and they took to the streets in loud vocal protest. "Meetings must be held and voice given to the oppressed laboring men," one speaker implored at a rally in Cincinnati. "There is no better way of expressing ourselves than by the means of such assemblages as this." Throughout the country workers organized to protest the importation of Chinese workers. Many historians have dismissed the working-class response to North Adams. They

have belittled their demands and fears as "silly" and "exaggerated."⁸⁹ To workers, however, their fears were genuine and immediate. Manufacturers could indeed import workers to break strikes, and they did. Manufacturers could indeed threaten to import workers to intimidate unions, and they did. Employers brazenly looked to China which, with its 400,000,000 inhabitants, appeared to offer an inexhaustible supply of cheap labor. North Adams served as the catalyst for working-class protest--not against Chinese immigration but against Chinese importation. In face of all the open threats and ongoing reports of importing Chinese laborers to the East, it is truly remarkable that (non-Californian) rank-and-file workers throughout the country maintained unity and neither compromised their ideals of open immigration nor succumbed to pressure from their so-called leaders.⁹⁰

Congress, the Republican Party, and the Working Classes

This rank-and-file working-class solidarity is all the more remarkable when contrasted with the dissension the North Adams incident precipitated in other groups. Republicans never quite got a handle on the issue, at least not as a party. At a Fourth of July celebration in Woodstock, Connecticut, Representative Benjamin F. Butler of Massachusetts squared off against newspaper editor and former Connecticut Governor Joseph R. Hawley. Butler, a

one-time Democrat and Radical Republican ever angling for the workingman's vote, took the position of the rank and file. "Is it not the theory of our government that we shall receive all who come to us animated by the love of liberty, and who desire to enjoy its sweets?" he asked. Certainly, he answered, but Americans must oppose schemes to bring workers here "by contract, or by force, as serfs" solely "to satisfy the avarice of men." Recalling the horrors of slavery, Butler asked, "what will be the effect, what the result, and where the end shall reach by importation, by contract or purchase of laboring men from any land ... who are to be tasked laborers only for ever, and who are therefore not men but merchandise?" Like workers, Butler focused on importation. He attacked the Chinese as "unhomogeneous ... semi-barbarous ... [and] strangers to our civilization [and] ... religion." Still, he refused to bar their free entry to the United States. "Let us not by any means," he concluded, "hinder or prohibit the voluntary coming to this country of all men who choose to add their labor, their energies and their industry in aid of our own."⁹¹

Hawley, an old anti-slavery crusader and a founder of the state's Free Soil and Republican parties, also urged open immigration. "I don't know how to go to work to lock the doors of the United States," he said. "I wish the Chinese had a better education in regard to American

institutions. I wish they could bring with them a better religion; but I believe they all can read. With our flag over me, and the New Testament in my hand, I say, Let them come!" Hawley emphatically urged "keeping open the gateways of the United States to the free access of all immigrating peoples." He also noted that he "could see no injury to any of our useful institutions by encouraging industrial immigration to our shores from every part of the earth." In this phrase lay the essential difference between Butler and Hawley: in "encouraging industrial immigration," Hawley offered tacit endorsement of imported labor. Unlike Butler and the working classes, the patrician ex-governor made no distinction between immigration and importation. Both should be permitted and encouraged without restriction. Hawley, it might be added, was closely connected to the American Emigrant Company, and his newspaper, the Hartford Courant, served as its unofficial organ.⁹²

The difference between Butler and Hawley--between opposition to and support of contract labor--threatened to divide the Republican party. On the same day Butler and Hawley confronted each other in Connecticut, Senators engaged in a lively debate in Washington. The debate actually began two days earlier when Charles Sumner [R-MA], dean of the Republican party, offered an amendment to strike out the word "white" in a pending naturalization bill. The bill was originally drawn up to prevent unnaturalized

immigrants from voting, and was aimed at the Irish who, Republicans charged, were fraudulently led to the polls before they became citizens. Removing the word "white" would make all naturalization laws apply equally to everyone--white, black, and Chinese. Such provision would thereby open the door to Chinese naturalization and citizenship--and be an inducement presumably to Chinese immigration. Sumner's amendment overshadowed the bill's original intent and threw the Senate into a ruckus. Amid this maelstrom the recent protests of the workingmen reverberated through the halls of the Capitol.⁹³

"The country has just awakened to the question and to the enormous magnitude of the question, involving a possible immigration of many millions, involving another civilization, involving labor problems that no intellect can solve without study and without time," declared sometime Radical Oliver P. Morton [R-IN]. "Are you now prepared to settle the Chinese problem, thus in advance inviting that immigration? I am not prepared to do it." Nor was moderate Republican John Sherman [R-OH]. When debate resumed on July 4, he called Chinese naturalization "among the most grave and difficult propositions that have ever been submitted to Congress." He urged further deliberation on the subject. To Lyman Trumbull [R-IL] the issue was less perplexing. As author of the Freedmen's Bureau and Civil Rights bills of 1866, this Illinois Radical could not accept discrimination

against the Chinese. "We have struck the word 'white' out of the naturalization laws so far as it applies to the Hottentot, to the pagan of Africa," he stated. "Now, is it proposed to deny the right of naturalization to the Chinaman, who is infinitely above the African in intelligence, in manhood, and in every respect?" Carl Schurz [R-MO] suggested a compromise to naturalize Chinese immigrants who came to settle but not Chinese "birds of passage" who intended to return to their native land. Timothy O. Howe [R-WI] suggested a religious test for immigrants which would bar naturalization to "any person born in a pagan country, unless with his oath of allegiance the applicant shall take and file an oath abjuring his belief in all forms of paganism." (This comment gave the otherwise silent Democrats a chance to criticize Republicans for subverting the First Amendment by threatening to impose a religious test.) Most Radicals, however, were less conflicted and still clung to their belief in equal rights for all men. Samuel C. Pomeroy [R-KS] fully endorsed Sumner's amendment as did Matthew Carpenter [R-WI] and Jacob Howard [R-MI]. Aaron H. Cragin [R-NH] even went a step further, urging striking out not only the word "white" but also the word "male."⁹⁴

Sumner himself seemed taken aback by the tempest he had unleashed. For three years he had been trying to pass this amendment. Sumner, the Senate's most prominent Radical and

abolitionist, had originally introduced the measure during the height of Radical Reconstruction in 1867, only to see George F. Edmunds [R-VT] remand it to committee and then bury it. Sumner had reintroduced the measure in 1869, but again it got bottled up in committee. The time had at last come, he said. Waving letter after letter from Southern blacks claiming they had been denied citizenship because of the word "white" in the nation's naturalization laws, Sumner made an impassioned plea for racial justice. "I propose to strike out ... a requirement disgraceful to this country and to this age," he stated. For support, he recited the Declaration of Independence (a particularly apt occasion, he noted, it being the Fourth of July). "I consider the Declaration of Independence as paramount law," he said, "not to be set aside or questioned in any respect--sovereign, absolute, irreversible, and which we are all bound to respect." This great document, he said bluntly, did not say all white men are created equal, but that all men are created. Sumner implored his colleagues to pass his amendment. "Reconstruction," he concluded, "will have new strength when you show this homage to human nature."⁹⁵

The Senate narrowly rejected Sumner's amendment, 22-23 (with 27 not voting), but in a second vote approved it, 27-22 (with 23 not voting). The Senate then voted to reconsider the amendment but again voted it down, 14-30 (with 28 not voting). Sumner resubmitted it immediately and

it lost by a comparable margin, 12-26 (with 34 not voting). A similar amendment specifically allowing Chinese to be naturalized also went down to defeat, 9-31 (with 32 not voting), and the bill as a whole without the amendment finally passed 33-8 (with 31 not voting).⁹⁶

The closeness of the early votes reveals that many Republicans, Radical and Moderate, were still guided by their ideals of equal rights and racial justice forged in the Civil War and embedded in law during Reconstruction. Citizenship and political rights, they believed, should be granted to all men and all newcomers regardless of race. At the same time, however, they seemed less than eager to fight for these rights. Radicals Henry Wilson [R-MA] and Hannibal Hamlin [R-ME] both favored Sumner's amendment but voted against it because they feared it would both jeopardize and delay passage of the bill as a whole. "We have consumed a great deal of time," Hamlin said. "I see no end to this debate. I want to be practical." Being "practical" meant rejecting Sumner's amendment. Senator Morton pointed toward the future when he stripped the Declaration of Independence of any broader application. Naturalization, he said, was a question of "policy and expediency, and not a question of natural right." Roscoe Conkling [R-NY] also pointed toward the future. Although he supported Sumner's amendment he mocked the distinguished Senator for making "so much noise." The ideals of the Civil War no longer dictated policy nor

commanded center stage. Unlike black suffrage, Chinese naturalization and enfranchisement promised scant electoral benefits. With the Chinese congregated in the single small state of California, Republicans had little political incentive to push for Chinese citizenship. Without this pressure, the egalitarian principles that had inspired Radical Reconstruction began to wane.⁹⁷

But they had by no means disappeared. William Stewart [R-NV] invoked this heritage repeatedly as he steered the discussion away from Chinese naturalization to Chinese importation. "Is it not the duty of a humane Congress," he asked, "first to see that no more coolies are imported into this country under these contracts? Let us liberate them; and then when a Chinaman is naturalized, if that time should come, let him be naturalized because he is a freeman, and because he voluntarily chooses to become an adopted citizen...." Stewart, still seething over the Senate's failure to vote on his contract labor bill, invoked the support of the working classes:

While I would protect anybody who comes to this country voluntarily in his right to labor and live ... without distinction of race, or color, or anything else, I will not sanction any attempt, no matter how it may be glossed over, to introduce a system of slave labor in competition with free labor in this country; and you will find that the people of this country will not sanction it. The mechanics of Massachusetts will not sanction it. Who that has seen the lovely villages of New England, composed of residents of mechanics ... can find it in his heart to consent to bring coolie slaves there to live on rice and reduce the wages so as to throw those people out of employment? Is that right?

Stewart reiterated his fervent support for Chinese immigration. "There is no question about their right to be here," he stated. "We say let those Chinamen who wish to come here voluntarily do so, and they shall be protected by the strong arm of the Government." Stewart, the Senator endorsed by numerous working-class meetings that summer, hammered away at his colleagues. "If people want to come here from Asia, or anywhere else, on their own account, voluntarily, let them do so. We are a free people. America must be the asylum of all who choose to come here, but it shall not again be a refuge for slave-masters." Echoing workers at meetings nationwide, he concluded: "I want it distinctly understood now that my platform in regard to the Chinese is simply this: I would let those who choose to come here voluntarily do so ... [but] I would prohibit all coolie contracts."⁹⁸

Stewart transformed the debate into a forum on the Chinese. Senator George H. Williams [R-OR], a fellow Republican and Westerner, rose to rebut. "Mongolians," he said, "no matter how long they may stay in the United States, will never lose their identity as a peculiar and separate people." Their "besotted ignorance," he added, "is only equaled by their moral debasement." Williams had been a chief defender of the contract labor law of 1864 and argued against its repeal in 1866. But when it came to the Chinese, race ruled everything. Chinese "immigration or

importation into this country," he said, "will be productive of inconceivable mischief." Only total exclusion could save the nation from this "influx of paganism and pollution to our shores." Williams, whom President Grant would shortly appoint Attorney General, lampooned Sumner's argument: "does the Declaration of Independence mean that Chinese coolies, that the Bushmen of south Africa, that the Hottentots, the Digger Indians, heathen, pagan, and cannibal, shall have equal political rights under this Government with citizens of the United States?" No, Williams scoffed, "that is the absurd and foolish interpretation."⁹⁹

The debate over importation resumed four days later when Stewart again introduced his bill to outlaw contract labor. The U.S. had "no right" to prohibit free immigration, he said. "Free labor is the motto of this country; free labor is the power of this country.... While we admit men of all nations who wish to labor in a free country, we are unalterably opposed to any form of slave labor, we are unalterably opposed to the importation of any people to be bound by contracts that render them less than free."¹⁰⁰

Senator Garrett Davis [D-KY] disagreed. Seconding Williams, he called the Chinese "barbarous Mongolian invaders." "I am for keeping out the Chinese absolutely from our continent as well as from our community," he said.

"I am for opening the portals of our nation to all the European races; but I am for an embargo and total exclusion of all other races, and especially the Chinese race." This unreconstructed Southerner also wanted to "eject the entire negro population" from the U.S. as well. Few others matched Davis's extremism; no other Democrat east of the Rockies, in fact, participated in the debate. Except for Davis, the only Senators actively urging Chinese exclusion hailed from the West: Eugene Casserly [D-CA], George Williams [R-OR], and Henry W. Corbett [R-OR]. These three Senators were more than offset by fellow Westerners William Stewart and James W. Nye [R-NV]. A strong supporter of Stewart's bill, Nye declared: "we shall not allow from any source, from Europe, or from India, or from Africa, a system of immigration that savors of peonage, or of obligation to toil unrequited for their fellow-man." At the same time, Nye stated, "To prevent Chinese immigration is as impossible as it is to prevent the rolling waves of the Pacific Ocean."¹⁰¹

Where did the Republican party finally stand in 1870 on the issue of imported contract labor and the Chinese? Both everywhere and nowhere. Republicans recoiled at any hint of the revival of slavery and wanted all vestiges of the institution obliterated. At the same time Republicans also clung to the ancient English tradition of free contract, the right of private individuals--employer and employee--to make any arrangement they chose free from government

interference. The North Adams incident suddenly placed these two principles at loggerheads, and Stewart's bill threatened to force a showdown. But the showdown never came. The Senate failed to vote on Stewart's bill. Although the Republican party enjoyed the greatest Senate majority of all time (56-11) and could easily have passed the bill, the party hierarchy declined to bring the bill to a vote. Two reasons account for this: confusion and indifference. Importation vexed Republicans and party leaders preferred postponing a decision. As Senator Simon Cameron [R-PA] suggested, they might just as well table the bill for a year and see what happens.¹⁰² Republicans could well afford to ignore the demands of the working classes, who at the time carried little weight in the halls of Congress and national affairs. Nor was the issue one that Republican politicians much cared about. They had no need to care. Unlike workers who feared for their livelihood, Republican politicians could duck the subject without fear of reprisal. With comfortable majorities in both houses of Congress and with a popular general installed in the White House, Republicans had no interest in championing a controversial issue, especially one that could alienate important members of the manufacturing community. Nor did they wish to acknowledge in law the careful distinctions made by Senator Stewart and the working classes. Avoiding the controversy seemed, from a political

standpoint, the shrewdest way to handle it. Republicans were divided on importation but not racked by it. They could afford to wait and see how the political winds blew. As for immigration, Republicans, like the working classes, evinced little interest in tampering with the nation's traditional open door policy. Although many Republicans voiced concerns regarding the impact of Chinese immigration, and freely suggested limiting the rights of Chinese immigrants, virtually none proposed closing the nation's gates. Both the ideals of the party and its complacent supremacy in national affairs precluded any move toward Chinese exclusion in 1870.

Republican spokesmen outside of Congress took a variety of stands. The Boston Commonwealth and Springfield Republican fully endorsed the right of employers to import workers on contract. The Cincinnati Gazette, on the other hand, downplayed importation and urged total exclusion of Chinese immigrants. Most Republicans, however, while leaning toward support for importation, found the issue just as vexing as did their leaders in the Senate. The New York Tribune, one of the nation's most influential Republican journals, could not maintain a consistent position on even the mere significance of the issue. On June 18, the Tribune called the Chinese issue "not worthy and ... not destined to assume any grave political importance." Six days later the Tribune reversed itself. Suddenly the Chinese issue was "of

paramount importance," and on June 30 it became "one of the gravest questions of the age." A week later the Tribune again downplayed it, and at the end of July noted that as "a political issue" it had "ridiculously failed." In these comments the Tribune found itself temporarily swayed by the working-class protests, yet ultimately sympathetic to manufacturing interests and Republican indifference. But the issue was not simple, not even simple enough to remain important or unimportant in editors' views. Questions of freedom and slavery and racial equality were not ones Republicans could dispose of easily in 1870.¹⁰³

The group most torn over the issue of Chinese immigration and importation was abolitionists. This daring group of idealists that had led the battle cry against slavery now found itself hopelessly divided. Wendell Phillips emphatically echoed the working-class stance opposing importation and favoring voluntary immigration. Frederick Douglass and old Free Soiler George W. Julian both endorsed this position. Most abolitionists, however, found themselves unable to think in class terms. They refused to recognize any connection between contract labor and slavery. "Mr. Sampson," wrote William Lloyd Garrison, "... simply asserted his unquestionable right as an employer, as against a brow-beating and exacting combination." Denouncing the Knights of St. Crispin as "dictatorial" and working-class leaders as "political demagogues," the nation's most honored

abolitionist defended the right to import foreign workers. Sampson's contract, he said, was made "in the usual manner, and under lawful conditions; and [it] is equally absurd [sic] and impertinent for any to inveigh against it." Garrison could see no reason "why Chinamen should not be as freely induced to add their skill and labor to our capital stock...."104

Other abolitionists echoed these views. Julia Ward Howe deemed the working-class protests nothing more than "attempts made to avert competition and effect a monopoly in the labor interest [which] would, if successful dwarf and impoverish our country." Imported Chinese workers would provide a healthy antidote to unions and strikes. Lydia Maria Child conceded the dangers of widescale importation, but did not let it influence her anti-union stance. "If companies of men are allowed to buy up Chinese vagabonds, to sell them in this country, it will undoubtedly be a very great evil," she said. "But the outcry about the Coolie trade is merely another sop to Cerberus now rampant under the form of monopoly of labor."105

On another end of the spectrum were such abolitionists as Henry Blackwell and James M. Ashley (as well as neo-labor activist Robert W. Hume). Blackwell wanted no Chinese--whether as imported laborers or free immigrants--in the United States. "Uncle Sam," he wrote, "... cannot afford to admit a horde of barbarous Asiatics." Ashley was even more

direct and more emphatic. A former Congressman and an anti-slavery zealot since the early 1840s, James Ashley of Ohio had led the fight to abolish slavery in Washington, D.C. in 1862, and a year later introduced the first version of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution. During Reconstruction, Ashley had spearheaded the drive to impeach President Johnson. But Ashley's support for black freedom did not translate into sympathy for people of other races. As governor of Montana Territory he urged a policy of genocide against Native Americans. "The Indian race on this continent has never been anything but an unmitigated curse to civilization," he wrote, and "every settler on the frontier wishes them individually and collectively" a "speedy" death. To welcome the Chinese would only add to the nation's problems. "In Montana we want no more Chinamen or Indians or barbarians of any race;--we already have enough and to spare." Directly confronting Phillips in the pages of the National Standard, Ashley wrote: "I agree with him that the 'Importation of human freight is an unmitigated evil,' but I go further and say that the incoming of multitudes of barbarians from any country, whether they come voluntarily or are imported by Capital, is an unmixed evil." Ashley urged exclusion on the same grounds that "no man of ordinary intelligence would invite into his family a barbarian, or an imbecile or criminal or a person of any race with a loathsome disease...."¹⁰⁶

Abolitionists thus expressed a wide range of attitudes toward Chinese immigration and imported labor. Garrison's stance in favor of importation garnered the most support. Why did abolitionists, a group of people that had devoted their entire lives to emancipation, racial equality, and social justice reveal such a profound lack of sympathy for rank-and-file workers? A simple explanation is that many workers were Irish, and "Sons of Erin" had gained notoriety for opposing both emancipation and black advancement. On a deeper level, abolitionists could not bring themselves to support what was fast becoming known as "class legislation." They believed that the primary role of the state was to protect the political rights of individuals, not the economic rights of a class. As Lydia Maria Child remarked, "money and labor ought to be left to regulate themselves."¹⁰⁷ That government non-interference redounded in favor of capital did not bother abolitionists; such a "laissez-faire" approach, however, would make abolitionists largely irrelevant to the problems of the Gilded Age. Abolitionists were fading. With the passage of the Fifteenth Amendment in the spring of 1870 their agenda had been virtually completed. The cause that had united a generation had been won and success spelled doom for a group unable to translate their moral fervor into other issues. Abolitionists had recently split in two over women's rights, and their split over the Chinese issue further rent this

aging band of reformers. Abolitionists no longer spoke with a single voice on human rights or, even more specifically, racial matters. Once the crusading vanguard for racial justice, abolitionists no longer served as the conscience of the nation.

Other groups rushed to fill the void. Among them were the working classes. In the cacophony of voices in the Reconstruction era, workers claimed the free-labor legacy of the Civil War. They had "shouldered the rifle" to end slavery and they would surely do it again to prevent what they perceived as its reimposition. The importation of labor, while free from coercion and violence, portrayed clear-cut similarities to slavery. Large numbers of poor foreigners were being transported thousands of miles to labor for a mere pittance. Furthermore, they were being used not simply as workers but as weapons--as strikebreakers--against American citizens. The rank and file clothed their protest not in the rhetoric of race v. race or immigrant v. native but in that of slavery v. freedom. For this ideal they had risked their lives and for this ideal they would continue to fight. And in favor of free immigration and against contract importation they would remain united for years to come.

The racism voiced at many working-class meetings resembled that of Americans everywhere, from editorial rooms to the halls of Congress. What is remarkable is that

workers--the only group directly threatened by imported labor--did not allow their ingrained racism to triumph. They consistently welcomed voluntary Chinese immigrants and closed the door only to imported workers. Few people living east of the Rocky Mountains in 1870--workers, editors, or politicians--had any interest in restricting Chinese immigration. But the issue was now open for debate. As the Springfield Republican noted in September, "the Chinese question, though it is far from being engrossing, or alarming as yet, is being forced upon us with a rapidity that no one could have anticipated...."¹⁰⁸

North Adams had opened the floodgates. The importation of seventy-five Chinese laborers sparked workers to take to the streets in protest. They protested importation and not, as historians have alleged, immigration. Workers, as we have seen, made great efforts to distinguish between the two. But were such efforts genuine? Did workers simply use importation as a smoke screen to mask an underlying opposition to Chinese immigration? To answer these questions it is necessary to investigate the ideas workers held of Chinese immigrants. We have examined the words they uttered. We must now examine the images they and other Americans encountered. Chinese characters were everywhere in Gilded Age popular culture--in cartoons, in songs, in plays, and in dime novels. How were these characters portrayed? Were they good or were they evil? Were Chinese

characters presented as so foreign, so different, and so threatening that an audience could only come away favoring their removal from the United States? In tracing the origins of the Chinese Exclusion Act it is essential to understand the prominent stereotypes and stock images of Chinese immigrants that Americans held in the post-Civil War era. Only then can we understand the connection between perception and action, between racism and legislation.

NOTES

1. "Wachusett," Boston Advertiser, June 15, 1870, reprinted in New York Sun, June 18, 1870, p. 2; Adams Transcript, Aug. 18, 1870, p. 2; Massachusetts Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor, Embracing the Account of Its Operations and Inquiries From March 1, 1870, to March 1, 1871 (Boston: Wright & Potter, 1871), pp. 233, 238.

2. "Wachusett," Boston Advertiser, June 15, 1870, reprinted in New York Sun, June 18, 1870, p. 2; New York Sun, June 22, 1870, p. 3; Springfield Republican, June 15, 1870, p. 8, June 18, 1870, p. 4; New York Herald, June 26, 1870, p. 4.

3. The quotes are from New York Sun, June 29, 1870, p. 2; Springfield Republican, June 13, 1870, p. 8. The ten journals included the New York Tribune, New York World, New York Globe, Boston Herald, Boston Advertiser, Springfield Republican, Troy Times, Albany Times, Harper's Weekly, and Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper. In 1854, William C. Kelly imported ten Chinese laborers to work in his iron factory in Kentucky but little came of the experiment. See Gunther Barth, Bitter Strength: A History of the Chinese in the United States, 1850-1870 (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1964), pp. 187-88.

4. John R. Commons, et. al., History of Labour in the United States, II (New York: Macmillan, 1918), pp. 150-51; Selig Perlman, A History of Trade Unionism in the United States (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1950; first published 1922), p. 62; Barth, Bitter Strength: A History of the Chinese in the United States, p. 202; Stuart Creighton Miller, The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1750-1882 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1969), p. 195; Gwendolyn Mink, Old Labor and New Immigrants in American Political Development: Union, Party, and State, 1875-1920 (Ithaca: Cornell, 1986), chapter 3, especially pp. 73, 77, 79; Mary Roberts Coolidge, Chinese Immigration (New York: Holt, 1909); Alexander Saxton, The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California (Berkeley: University of California, 1971); John Philip Hall, "The Knights of St. Crispin in Massachusetts, 1869-1878," Journal of Economic History, XVIII: 2 (June 1958), pp. 165, 168; Isabella Black, "American Labour and Chinese Immigration," Past and Present, 25 (July 1963), pp. 59-76; Dale Baum, "Woman Suffrage and the 'Chinese Question' in Massachusetts, 1865-1876," New England Quarterly, LVI: 1 (March 1983), p. 72.

5. The Statistics of the Population of the United States, Embracing the Tables of Race, Nationality, Sex, and Selected Occupations. To Which Are Added the Statistics of School Attendance and Illiteracy, of Schools, Libraries, Newspapers and Periodicals, Churches, Paupers and Crime, and of Areas, Families, and Dwellings. Compiled from the Original Returns of the Ninth Census, (June 1, 1870,) under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior, by Francis A. Walker, Superintendent of Census, I (Washington, 1872), p. xvii. Even if the census undercounted the Chinese population, as many alleged, their numbers in the East were still minuscule.

In defining the geographical regions of the United States, I have followed the categories used by the United States Census. The Northeast includes: Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. The Midwest, called the North Central, includes: Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, Missouri, Nebraska, and Kansas. The Midwest also includes North and South Dakota, but as these were not states until 1889, I have omitted them from my calculations. (Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970, Part I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1975), introduction.)

6. New York Star, Aug. 29, 1870, p. 2, Sept. 24, 1870, p. 2; "Inquirer" (letter, South Framingham, July 4, 1870) in Springfield Republican, July 6, 1870, p. 5; Northampton Free Press, June 21, 1870, p. 2; Workingman's Advocate, Sept. 10 and 17, 1870, p. 1; Cincinnati Gazette, July 11, 1870, p. 1; New York Tribune, Aug. 3, 1869, p. 4.

7. C. Ben Johnson quoted in Workingman's Advocate, Dec. 10, 1870, p. 3; New York Herald, June 11, 1870, Oct. 30, 1870, p. 8; Northampton Free Press, June 21, 1870, p. 2.

8. Charles Francis Adams, Jr., "The Protection of the Ballot in the National Elections," Journal of Social Science, I (June 1869), pp. 107, 108, 110n; Bayard Taylor, A Visit to India, China, and Japan, in the Year 1853 (New York: Putnam, 1855), p. 354. By 1862 this book had gone through 16 editions.

9. National Anti-Slavery Standard, May 29, 1869, p. 2; Wendell Phillips, "The Chinese," National Standard, July 30, 1870, p. 4; John Stuart Mill to Henry George (letter, Avignon, France, October 23, 1869) reprinted in New York Tribune, July 5, 1870, p. 5. See also Mill to Horace White (letter, Avignon, France, Feb. 13, 1870) for a clarification, in ibid.

10. Miller, The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1750-1882.

11. Saxton, The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California; Philip A. Roach, "Minority Report of the Select Committee on Senate Bill, No. 63, 'an act to enforce contracts and obligations to perform work and labor,'" California Senate Journal, 3rd sess., 1852, Appendix 699-74, quoted in Barth, Bitter Strength: A History of the Chinese in the United States, pp. 139-41.

12. For an overview of Burlingame's mission to the United States, see Frederick Wells Williams, Anson Burlingame and the First Chinese Mission to Foreign Powers (New York: Scribners, 1912), especially chapter 3. For a day-to-day account of the Chinese legation's travels, the New York Herald provided excellent coverage. The quotes from Burlingame can be found in New York Herald, Aug 23, 1868, p. 8, and "Speech of Mr. Burlingame at a Municipal Banquet in Boston," in Official Papers of the Chinese Legation (Berlin: C. Salewski, n.d.), pp. 33, 38-39. Among the guests were the mayor, the governor, Senator Charles Sumner, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Ralph Waldo Emerson.

13. Wells, Anson Burlingame and the First Chinese Mission to Foreign Powers, pp. 128-29, 156-57; New York Herald, June 6, 1868, June 10, 1868, p. 3, June 18, 1868, p. 3, July 26, 1868, p. 4; "Speech of Mr. Burlingame at a Municipal Banquet in Boston," pp. 37-39. For a text of the treaty, see Charles I. Bevans, comp. Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America, 1776-1949, 6 (Washington: U.S. Department of State, 1971).

14. Because the Senate was in executive session, the Congressional Globe printed no official record of the debate. Both the New York Herald, which noted that senators debated the treaty for nine hours, and the New York Sun reported that the vote was unanimous. Two years later, however, Kentucky Senator Garrett Davis claimed he had voted against the treaty. (New York Herald, July 25, 1868, p. 4, July 26, 1870, p. 4; New York Sun, July 27, 1868, p. 1; Congressional Globe, 41st Cong., 2nd sess., p. 5385 (July 8, 1870).)

15. New York World, June 11, 1868, p. 4; New York Herald, July 5, 1868, p. 6, July 15, 1868, p. 4. See also New York Sun, July 28, 1868, p. 2. For the proceedings of the National Labor Congress, see Workingman's Advocate, Oct. 10, 1868; New York World, Sept. 22-26, 1868. On Blaine, see James G. Blaine, "Mr. Burlingame as an Orator," Atlantic Monthly (Nov. 1870), reprinted in Blaine, Political Discussions Legislative, Diplomatic, and Popular, 1856-1886

(Norwich, Ct.: Henry Bill, 1887), pp. 106-08. "Mr. Burlingame's success at Peking," Blaine wrote, "will always remain the distinguishing feature in his remarkable career."

16. David Montgomery, Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans, 1862-1872 (New York: Knopf, 1967), pp. 140-41, chs. 6, 8; Abbott Emerson Smith, Colonists in Bondage: White Servitude and Convict Labor in America, 1607-1776 (New York: Norton, 1975; first published 1947), pp. 3-4; Charlotte Erickson, American Industry and the European Immigrant, 1860-1885 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1957), pp. 3-5 and accompanying notes.

17. Seventh Annual Report of the Chamber of Commerce of the State of New York, 1864-5, "Special Reports," pp. 21-22, quoted in John R. Commons, et. al., A Documentary History of American Industrial Society, IX (New York: Russell & Russell, 1958), pp. 74-75; Lincoln's Third Annual Message, Dec. 8, 1863, in James D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, VII (New York, 1897), p. 3383; Erickson, American Industry and the European Immigrant, 1860-1885, pp. 6-13. The Senate and House passed early versions of the bill in June and the final version on July 2. Lincoln signed it the same day. (Congressional Globe, 38th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 896 (March 2, 1863), 1793 (April 21, 1863), 3292 (June 27, 1863), 3495, 3530, 3536 (July 2, 1863).) For a text of the bill, see George P. Sanger, ed., The Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America from December 1863, to December 1865, XIII (Boston: Little, Brown, 1866), pp. 385-87. The law exempted contract laborers from the wartime draft and provided for a Commissioner of Immigration.

18. Erickson, American Industry and the European Immigrant, 1860-1885, pp. 6-7, 17, 24, 27-28, 30, 33-35, 38-44; Souper quoted in Missouri Democrat, May 15, 1865, May 16-23, 1865, reprinted in Commons, et. al., A Documentary History of American Industrial Society, IX, pp. 78-80.

19. Erickson, American Industry and the European Immigrant, 1860-1885, pp. 51-52; W.H. Sylvis (letter, Philadelphia, Oct. 26, 1867) in Workingman's Advocate, Nov. 2, 1867, p. 2.

20. Erickson, American Industry and the European Immigrant, 1860-1885, pp. 50, 52, 53; E. Peshine Smith to Henry Carey, May 4, 1866, quoted in ibid., p. 13; Iver Bernstein, The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War (New York: Oxford, 1990), p. 211.

21. Fincher's Trades' Review, which changed its name to National Trades' Review on March 17, 1866, was edited by Jonathan Fincher of Philadelphia, president of the Machinists' and Blacksmiths' International Union. The paper folded August 18, 1866. For articles attacking importation, see, for example, June 17, 1865, p. 22. Detroit Daily Union, quoted in National Trades' Review, May 19, 1866, p. 194; "Oblique" (letter, Cleveland, Dec. 28, 1865) in Fincher's Trades' Review, Jan. 6, 1866, p. 45.

22. Fincher's Trades Review, March 26, 1864, p. 6, quoted in Erickson, American Industry and the European Immigrant, p. 54; *ibid.*, pp. 54-58, 61; International Journal of the Iron Molders' International Union, Jan. 1867, p. 310 (see also Oct. 1866, p. 210); W.H. Sylvis (letter, Philadelphia, Oct. 26, 1867) in Workingman's Advocate, Nov. 2, 1867, p. 2. Sylvis's sudden death in 1869 dealt a serious blow to the labor movement. For a brief biographical sketch, see Montgomery, Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans, 1862-1872, pp. 223-29. For extended treatment, see Jonathan Grossman, William Sylvis, Pioneer of American Labor (New York: Columbia University Studies in History, Economics, and Public Law, No. 516, 1945).

23. Workingman's Advocate, Sept. 8, 1866, p. 2.

24. Erickson, American Industry and the European Immigrant, 1860-1885.

25. Workingman's Advocate, Sept. 1, 1866, p. 2. On the N.L.U. convention, see Montgomery, Beyond Equality, ch. 4, especially pp. 170-80.

26. Workingman's Advocate, Aug. 24, 1867 (also dated Aug. 31), p. 2; W.H. Sylvis (letter, Philadelphia, Oct. 26, 1867) in Workingman's Advocate, Nov. 2, 1867, p. 2.

27. Erickson, American Industry and the European Immigrant, pp. 28-30; Congressional Globe, 39th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 4040, 4041, 4043 (July 23, 1866). The unnamed senator was John Conness [R-CA].

28. Congressional Globe, 39th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 4040-43 (July 23, 1866).

29. Congressional Globe, 40th Cong., 2nd sess., Appendix, p. 505 (March 30, 1868).

30. Proceedings of the National Labor Congress can be found in Workingman's Advocate, Oct. 10, 1868. The quotes are from pp. 1, 2, 3. David Montgomery stresses that

LeBarnes "was not a worker but a Republican veteran of the anti-slavery fighting in Kansas." Nonetheless, he served as a labor spokesman and was popular among the working classes. (Montgomery, Beyond Equality, pp. 187, 270-72.)

31. Workingman's Advocate, Feb. 6, 1869, p. 2.

32. Hide and Leather Interest and Industrial Review, quoted in (Boston) American Workman, June 5, 1869, p. 6. On Chinese being removed from the camera's view, see David Montgomery, The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925 (New York: Cambridge, 1987), p. 68.

33. American Workman, June 5, 1869, p. 6; Cincinnati Commercial quoted in Workingman's Advocate, Aug. 14, 1869, p. 4; Workingman's Advocate, June 12, 1869, p. 2; San Francisco Chronicle, June 27, 1869, reprinted in New York Times, July 8, 1869, p. 2.

34. New York Tribune, July 6, 1869, p. 2; New York Sun, July 21, 1869, p. 1; Lucy M. Cohen, Chinese in the Post-Civil War South: A People Without a History (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1984), pp. 65-66. On the importation of Chinese from Cuba to Louisiana after the Civil War, see ibid., ch. 3.

35. All the major dailies gave prominent coverage to the Memphis Chinese Labor Convention. See especially Memphis Appeal. The best second-hand accounts are Cohen, Chinese in the Post-Civil War South, pp. 66-72, and Barth, Bitter Strength, pp. 189-93. The quote by Tye Kim Orr is from New York Tribune, July 15, 1869, p. 5.

36. For biographical and descriptive information on Koopmanschap, see St. Louis Republican, July 15, 1869, reprinted in New York Times, July 18, 1869, p. 3; New York Times, July 21, 1869, p. 2; New York Sun, July 21, 1869, p. 1. See also Barth, op. cit., pp. 191-93; and Cohen, op. cit., pp. 69-70, and 45n.

37. New York Tribune, July 16, 1869, p. 1, July 21, 1869, p. 1; Memphis Avalanche, July 16, 1869, reprinted in Commons, A Documentary History of American Industrial Society, IX, p. 83. The very language of the report treated the Chinese as if they were products. It talked of "procuring supplies that may be ordered" and money to be "paid on delivery of the laborer at Memphis." (Ibid., pp. 82, 83.)

38. New York Times, July 14, 1869, p. 4, July 20, 1869, p. 4; New York Sun, July 21, 1869, p. 1, July 22, 1869, p. 2; "Fair Play" (letter, New York, July 26) in New York Tribune, July 30, 1869, p. 2.

39. George S. Boutwell to James F. Casey, July 23, 1869, reprinted in New Orleans Picayune, July 27, 1869, cited in Cohen, Chinese in the Post-Civil War South, p. 73; "An Act to prohibit the 'Coolie Trade' by American Citizens in American Vessels," in George P. Sanger, ed., The Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations of the United States of America, From December 5, 1859, to March 3, 1863, XII (Boston: Little, Brown, 1863), pp. 340-41.

40. Eliot noted a chain of shipboard horrors including mutinies, massacres, and murders. Of 50,123 coolies shipped from China to Cuba from 1847 to 1859, Eliot said, 7,622 died en route from disease or violence. The bill, signed by Lincoln February 19, 1862, passed without opposition. For Eliot's speech, see Congressional Globe, 37th Cong., 2nd sess., pp. 350-52 (Jan. 15, 1862). See also pp. 16 (Dec. 4, 1861), 375, 377 (Jan. 17, 1862), 555-56 (Jan. 30, 1862), 581-82 (Jan. 31, 1862), 593 (Feb. 4, 1862), 838 (Feb. 14, 1862), 849, 855 (Feb. 17, 1862), 911 (Feb. 22, 1862).

41. Persia Crawford Campbell, Chinese Coolie Emigration to Countries Within the British Empire (London: P.S. King, 1923), chapter 3; Random House College Dictionary, rev. ed. (New York, 1980), p. 295; Noah Webster, An American Dictionary of the English Language, rev. ed. (New York: Harper, 1846), p. 953. The definition appeared in the appendix. By 1852, the term (spelled "cooly") appeared in the main body of the dictionary. See, for example, Webster, An American Dictionary of the English Language (Springfield: Merriam), editions of 1852 (p. 264), 1859 (p. 264), and 1861 (p. 264). Parker quoted in Cohen, Chinese in the Post-Civil War South, p. 27.

Twenty years later, Mississippi Senator James Z. George stated that because the law was so vague and weak no one had ever been prosecuted under it. (Congressional Globe, 47th Cong., 1st sess., p. 3404 (April 28, 1882). See also speech of Pennsylvania Representative A. Herr Smith, ibid., Appendix, p. 50 (March 16, 1882).)

42. Cohen, Chinese in the Post-Civil War South, pp. 73-74; New York Times, July 24, 1869, p. 2, July 25, 1869, p. 4, July 26, 1869, p. 5.

43. Memphis Avalanche, July 18, 1869, reprinted in New York Herald, July 25, 1869, p. 3; St. Louis Republican, July 15, 1869, reprinted in New York Times, July 18, 1869, p. 3, ibid.; p. 4, July 19, 1869, p. 5, July 20, 1869, p. 4, July

26, 1869, p. 2, M.F. Maure to George W. Gift (letter, Lexington, Virginia, July 10, 1869), printed in Richmond Dispatch, reprinted in ibid., July 31, 1869, p. 1; ibid., p. 4; New York Sun, July 21, 1869, p. 1, Aug. 16, 1869, p. 1; New York Tribune, July 21, 1869, p. 1, July 29, 1869, p. 1, Aug. 9, 1869, p. 1, Aug. 13, 1869, p. 3; Omaha Herald, quoted in ibid., Aug. 14, 1869, p. 2 (see also New York Sun, Aug. 2, 1869, p. 1, Sept. 15, 1869, p. 2); Cohen, Chinese in the Post-Civil War South, pp. 80-81; St. Louis Republican, quoted in R.W. Hume (letter, Astoria, Aug. 6, 1869) in Workingman's Advocate, Aug. 21, 1869, p. 3.

44. R.W. Hume, "John Chinaman," in Workingman's Advocate, Aug. 21, 1869, p. 4; Irish Republic, quoted in National Anti-Slavery Standard, Aug. 7, 1869, p. 1.

45. R.W. Hume (letter, Astoria, May 2, 1869) in Workingman's Advocate, May 15, 1869, p. 3; R.W. Hume (letter, Astoria, May 31, 1869) in ibid., June 26, 1869, p. 2; R.W. Hume (letter, Astoria, July 5, 1869) in ibid., July 17, 1869, p. 2; R.W. Hume (letter, Astoria, July 12, 1869) in ibid., July 24, 1869, p. 2; R.W. Hume (letter, Astoria, July 24, 1869) in ibid., Aug. 7, 1869, p. 2; R.W. Hume (letter, Astoria, Aug. 6, 1869) in ibid., Aug. 21, 1869, p. 3.

The content of Hume's writing in the Workingman's Advocate and the National (Anti-Slavery) Standard presents an interesting dichotomy. His letters and poems in the Advocate focused heavily on the alleged evils of Chinese immigration and its effect on the working classes. His articles in the Standard, however, scarcely ever mentioned the subject. In April 1870, the Standard promised its readers that Hume would write on "The Labor Question," and indeed, one of his articles began: "The live issues of the day are Labor, Temperance, and the freedom of Woman." Despite these comments, Hume all but ignored the Chinese issue in the Standard. Except for one brief mention of the Burlingame Treaty in 1869, Hume never discussed Chinese immigration or imported labor in the pages of the Standard. Hume's poems in the Standard were also of a completely different nature than those in the Workingman's Advocate. His poetic topics in the Standard focused on the freedmen of the South, the meaning of Thanksgiving Day, and the glories of ancient civilizations. The Chinese remained unmentioned. Was Hume pandering to a particular audience? Might he have had a class bias that conditioned his writing for different readers? The Standard described Hume as "a professional elocutionist of large experience and more than average ability." Among his abilities, no doubt, was determining which subjects were appropriate for which audiences--and which classes. Hume's articles and poems show further that writers and editors could subtly influence and reinforce

popular perceptions of class differences on particular issues. Such a phenomenon deserves closer scrutiny. (National Anti-Slavery Standard, Aug. 28, 1869, p. 1, Sept. 4, 1869, p. 3, Nov. 20, 1869, p. 2; National Standard, April 16, 1870, p. 3, Sept. 10, 1870, p. 3, Oct. 15, 1870, p. 6, Oct. 22, 1870, p. 5, Dec. 17, 1870, p. 5.)

46. See, for example, "Mountaineer" (letter, Girardsville, Schuylkill Co., June 25) in Workingman's Advocate, July 10, 1869, p. 2; J.T.C. (letter, New York, July 19, 1869) in ibid., July 31, 1869, p. 2; "H" (letter, New York, July 23, 1869) in ibid., Aug. 7, 1869, p. 2.

47. George Prindle (letter, McGregor, Iowa, July 3, 1869) in Workingman's Advocate, July 17, 1869, p. 2 (see also George Prindle (letter, McGregor, Iowa, July 13, 1869) in ibid., July 31, 1869, p. 2); Zerob (letter, Caledonia, Mo., Aug. 4, 1869) in ibid., Aug. 21, 1869, p. 3.

48. Workingman's Advocate, June 12, 1869, p. 1, Sept. 14, 1869, p. 1; New York Tribune, Aug. 17, 1869, p. 5.

49. New York Tribune, Aug. 20, 1869, p. 8, Aug. 23, 1869, p. 8; Workingman's Advocate, Sept. 4, 1869, p. 2, Sept. 11, 1869, p. 4, R.W. Hume (letter, Astoria, Aug. 22, 1869) in ibid., Sept. 4, 1869, p. 3.

50. New York Tribune, Aug. 23, 1869, p. 8.

51. Congressional Globe, 41st Cong., 2nd sess., pp. 3 (Dec. 6, 1869), 86 (Dec. 13, 1869), 300, 301 (Dec. 22, 1869).

52. George Rothwell Brown, ed., Reminiscence of Senator William M. Stewart of Nevada (New York and Washington: Neale, 1908). See especially pp. 21, 26, 77-78, 151, 167, 199-201, 205, 219-224, 231-38. See also Russell R. Elliott, Servant of Power: A Political Biography of William M. Stewart (Reno, 1983); William Gillette, The Right to Vote: Politics and the Passage of the Fifteenth Amendment (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1965), pp. 55-61, 67, 71, 78, 79, 157-58, 159; Congressional Globe, 41st Cong., 2nd sess., pp. 301 (Dec. 22, 1869), 5124-25 (July 2, 1870), 5150-51 (July 4, 1870), 5387 (July 8, 1870).

Stewart had met and befriended Twain in California and the senator considered him "a member of my family." The two men later had a falling out, however, and in his book Roughing It, Twain accused Stewart of cheating him in a business deal.

In 1871 President Grant offered Stewart a seat on the Supreme Court but Stewart declined it. He retired from the Senate in 1875 and was reelected twelve years later. He

became a fervent Populist and served until 1905, capping a remarkable Senate career of 29 years. In a curious sidenote, the mansion he built in Washington later served as the residence of the Chinese Minister to the United States. (Mark Twain, Roughing It (New York: Harper & Row, 1962; first published 1871), pp. 232-33; Brown, Reminiscence of Senator William M. Stewart, pp. 17, 219-24, 261, 278, 318; Harriet S. Blaine Beale, ed., Letters of Mrs. James G. Blaine, I (New York: Duffield, 1908), p. 204 and n.)

53. Congressional Globe, 41st Cong., 2nd sess., pp. 2895 (April 22, 1870), 2950 (April 25, 1870), 3238 (May 5, 1870), 4126 (June 6, 1870).

54. Ibid., pp. 4112 (June 6, 1870), 4275-79, 4284, (June 9, 1870), 4317-18, Appendix, pp. 410 (May 27, 1870), 452-53 (June 9, 1870).

55. Ibid., pp. 4538-39 (June 17, 1870), 4754-55 (June 23, 1870).

56. Adams Transcript, March 24, 1870, p. 2, Oct. 6, 1870, p. 2; Springfield Republican, June 10, 1870, p. 8, June 18, 1870, p. 4; Northampton Free Press, June 21, 1870, p. 2. On North Adams, see Timothy Coogan, "The Forging of a New England Mill Town: North and South Adams, Massachusetts, 1780-1880," (New York University, Ph.D. dissertation, forthcoming); Willis F. Spear, History of North Adams, Mass., 1749-1885 (North Adams, 1885); S. Proctor Thayer, "Adams and North Adams," History of Berkshire County, Massachusetts, I (New York, 1885). On the Crispins, see Montgomery, Beyond Equality, pp. 141-42, 369; Alan Dawley, Class and Community: The Industrial Revolution in Lynn (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard, 1976), chs. 5-8; Donald D. Lescohier, "The Knights of St. Crispin 1867-1874: A Study on Industrial Causes of Trade Unionism," Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin, no. 355 (Madison, Wisc., 1910). Lescohier must be used with great caution.

57. "Testimony of C.T. Sampson," in Massachusetts Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor, pp. 98-103. See also "Testimony of Alfred L. Wood, Daniel Luther, Oliver A. Brown, W.E. Hoskins, Isaac Tyler, Edward Gregson, L.W. Lemoine, and Lucius A. Ellis," and "Conclusions," in ibid., pp. 108-17. Springfield Republican, June 18, 1870, p. 4. On Sampson, see Frederick Rudolph, "Chinamen in Yankeedom: Anti-Unionism in Massachusetts in 1870," American Historical Review LIII: 1 (October 1947), pp. 7-9. 12-13.

58. "Testimony of C.T. Sampson," in Massachusetts Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor, pp. 103-07.

59. Ibid. Although Sampson tried to keep the contract secret, its contents were reprinted in numerous newspapers. See, for example, Adams Transcript, Aug. 18, 1870, p. 2.

60. "Testimony of C.T. Sampson," in Massachusetts Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor, p. 105; Population Schedules of the Ninth Census of the United States (Microfilm Roll 601, Massachusetts, II, Berkshire County, [National Archives and Records Service, Washington, 1965]), pp. 301-03.

61. Workingman's Advocate, June 11, 1870, p. 2.

62. Springfield Republican, June 15, 1870, p. 8; "Wachusett," Boston Advertiser, June 15, 1870, reprinted in New York Sun, June 18, 1870, p. 2.

63. New York Tribune, June 18, 1870, pp. 1-2.

64. New York Herald, June 26, 1870, p. 4; Springfield Republican, June 25, 1870, p. 5; Albany Journal, June 23, 1870, p. 3.

65. New York Herald, June 26, 1870, p. 4; Springfield Republican, June 15, 1870, p. 8; Albany Journal, June 25, 1870, p. 2; Boston Advertiser, reprinted in New York Herald, June 21, 1870, p. 6; "Testimony of Alfred L. Wood, Daniel Luther, Oliver A. Brown, W.E. Hoskins, Isaac Tyler, Edward Gregson, and L.W. Lemoine," in Massachusetts Report of the Bureau of Statistics of Labor, pp. 108-15. The quotes are from pp. 109, 111. Crispins may have taken heart from a point noted in the Bureau's review of the event which hinted that the Chinese could "learn and practice both combination and strike, as they have done in their own country with fearful result, or as in Calcutta, where, as the London Spectator declares, they have built the most powerful trade-union in the world." (Ibid., pp. 116-17.)

66. Springfield Republican, July 1, 1870, p. 4; New York Tribune, July 1, 1870, p. 1; New York Herald, June 30, 1870, p. 5. The Boston meeting consisted of two sessions, one in the afternoon and one in the evening.

Collins extended her Biblical analogy a few days later. Attacking General William T. Sherman for recently addressing a gathering of shoe manufacturers, Collins said: "'If Christ was in North Adams to-day he would take a cat of nine tails and whip him [Sampson] and all his sympathizers out of town, and Christ would be right, too.'" (New York Herald, July 5, 1870, p. 3.)

67. New York Star, Aug. 15, 1870, p. 1; New York Herald, June 30, 1870, p. 5; Springfield Republican, July 1, 1870, p. 4; New York Tribune, July 1, 1870, p. 1; Boston Investigator, July 6, 1870, reprinted in Commons, et. al., A Documentary History of American Industrial Society, IX, pp. 86-87.

68. New York Telegram, July 16, 1870; New York Tribune, July 1, 1870, p. 1; New York Sun, July 1, 1870, p. 1. The New York City meeting received wide coverage. For the most complete accounts, see New York Tribune, Sun, and Herald.

69. New York Sun, July 1, 1870, p. 1; New York Tribune, July 1, 1870, p. 1.

70. New York Tribune, July 1, 1870, p. 1; Springfield Republican, July 1, 1870, p. 5.

71. New York Sun, July 1, 1870, p. 1; New York Tribune, July 1, 1870, p. 1; New York Herald, July 1, 1870, p. 3.

72. New York Sun, July 1, 1870, p. 1; New York Herald, July 1, 1870, p. 3; New York Times, July 1, 1870, p. 1.

73. Springfield Republican, July 1, 1870, p. 5; New York Sun, July 1, 1870, p. 1; New York Tribune, July 1, 1870, p. 1.

74. Proceedings of the Tenth Annual Session of the Iron Molders' International Union, In Convention Assembled, at Philadelphia, July 6th, 1870 (Philadelphia: W.B. Selheimer, 1870), pp. 51-52 (see also p. 75); Workingman's Advocate, July 2, 1870, p. 3, July 9, 1870, p. 2, July 30, 1870, p. 2, Aug. 13, 1870, p. 2, Nov. 5 and 12, 1870, p. 1; Cincinnati Gazette, June 27, 1870, p. 1, July 9, 1870, p. 2, Aug. 19, 1870, p. 2; New York Bulletin de l'union republicaine de langue francaise, July 15, 1870, pp. 1, 2; Missouri Republican, July 8, 1870, p. 4, July 12, 1870, p. 2; Albany Journal, June 23, 1870, p. 3; Rochester Democrat, June 25, 1870, p. 1.

75. New York Tribune, July 22, 1870, p. 5.

76. Miller, The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1750-1882, p. 177.

77. John Swinton, The New Issue. The Chinese-American Question (New York: American News, 1870). The quotes are from pp. 3, 6-7, 10-14. See also New York Tribune, June 30, 1870, p. 1. On Swinton, see Richard O. Boyer and Herbert M. Morais, Labor's Untold Story (New York, 1980; first

published 1955), pp. 80-81; National Cyclopedia of American Biography, VIII (New York: White, 1924), p. 251.

78. On Hall's reference to Swinton's letter, see New York Tribune, July 1, 1870, p. 1.

79. Commons, et. al., A Documentary History of American Industrial Society, IX, pp. 257-59, 262; Cincinnati Enquirer, Aug. 18, 1870, p. 3; Workingman's Advocate, Aug. 27, 1870, p. 4; Cincinnati Gazette, Aug. 20, 1870, p. 1.

80. Cincinnati Gazette, Aug. 22, 1870, p. 1; New York Tribune, Aug. 22, 1870, p. 3, Aug. 25, 1870, p. 2; Workingman's Advocate, Aug. 27, 1870, p. 2.

81. Commons, et. al., A Documentary History of American Industrial Society, IX, pp. 266-67; Cincinnati Gazette, Sept. 13, 1870, p. 2.

For historians who have misread this resolution, see, for example, Commons, et. al., History of Labour in the United States, II, pp. 149-50; Perlman, A History of Trade Unionism in the United States, p. 62 and n; Rudolph, "Chinamen in Yankeedom: Anti-Unionism in Massachusetts in 1870," p. 25; Hall, "The Knights of St. Crispin in Massachusetts, 1869-1878," pp. 165, 168; Black, "American Labor and Chinese Immigration," p. 67; Baum, "Woman Suffrage and the 'Chinese Question' in Massachusetts, 1865-1876," p. 72. See also Miller, The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1750-1882, pp. 196-97; Saxton, The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California, p. 105.

82. Boston Transcript, Sept. 8, 1870, p. 2.

83. Ibid., p. 3; New York Tribune, Sept. 9, 1870, p. 3. See also Workingman's Advocate, Sept. 10 and 17, 1870, p. 2.

84. Boston Transcript, Sept. 8, 1870, p. 3; Wendell Phillips, "The Chinese," National Standard, July 30, 1870, pp. 4-5; Workingman's Advocate, Aug. 13, 1870, p. 2, Oct. 1, 1870, p. 2. Phillips praised the platform and accepted the nomination. Two other parties also nominated Phillips for governor: the Woman Suffrage party and the Prohibitory party. Phillips had long supported woman suffrage but was not a prohibitionist. In the general election, Phillips received 21,900 votes (14.5%). (See Montgomery, Beyond Equality, pp. 369-70.)

85. New York Sun, June 22, 1870, p. 3; Boston Advertiser, reprinted in ibid.; New York Sun, Dec. 14, 1870, p. 2; Hampshire Gazette and Northampton Courier, June 28, 1870, p. 3; Cohen, Chinese in the Post-Civil War South, pp.

76-78, 89-91, 95; Springfield Republican, June 24, 1870, p. 5, Sept. 9, 1870, p. 4; Workingman's Advocate, Sept. 24, 1870, p. 2; Boston Commonwealth, Aug. 20, 1870, p. 3.

Palmer found that many clients wanted Chinese as domestics so he revised his plans to import workers singly rather than "in colonies." (Springfield Republican, Sept. 9, 1870, p. 4.)

86. A leading member of Sisson and Wallace was a brother of Central Pacific Railroad President Charles Crocker. (Saxton, The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California, p. 65.)

The Trans-Continental was a novelty newspaper published from a printing press taken aboard the first railroad car to cross the country and back again, from May to July 1870. The advertisement appeared in eight issues: May 24, 1870, p. 4 (Niagara Falls); May 26, 1870, p. 2 (Omaha); May 27, 1870, p. 2 (Cheyenne, Wyoming); June 25, 1870, p. 3 (San Francisco); June 27, 1870, p. 4 (Promontory Point, Utah); June 28, 1870, p. 4 (Laramie, Wyoming); June 30, 1870, p. 3 (Burlington, Iowa); July 4, 1870, p. 4 (Boston).

87. New York Sun, June 18, 1870, p. 1, July 9, 1870, p. 4, July 11, 1870, p. 4; New York Herald, June 23, 1870, p. 5; New York Tribune, June 30, 1870, p. 2; Boston Transcript, July 5, 1870, July 12, 1870, p. 2, Aug. 1, 1870, p. 2; Springfield Republican, July 29, 1870, p. 2; Workingman's Advocate, Sept. 24, 1870, p. 2; St. Louis Republican, July 30, 1870, p. 2; New York Star, Aug. 10, 1870, p. 1.

88. Utica Observer, reprinted in Albany Journal, June 20, 1870, p. 2; New York Tribune, July 2, 1870, p. 4, Aug. 31, 1870, p. 5; New York Herald, June 26, 1870, p. 4; Punchinello, July 23, 1870, p. 265; Boston Advertiser, reprinted in New York Sun, June 22, 1870, p. 3; ibid., Aug. 31, 1870, p. 1, Sept. 2, 1870, p. 2; R.W. Hume, "Chow-Chow and his Friends," in Workingman's Advocate, Jan. 1, 1870, p. 1; Massachusetts Report of the Bureau of the Statistics of Labor, pp. 461-63.

89. Rudolph, "Chinamen in Yankeedom: Anti-Unionism in Massachusetts in 1870," p. 25; Miller, The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1750-1882, p. 175. In his antiquarian account of the incident at North Adams, Rudolph downplayed the significance of the event and made numerous factual errors. He based his article on just a handful of sources; as a consequence he misstated the ages of the Chinese workers, misunderstood the position of the working classes, and failed to place the event in its appropriate historical context.

90. Springfield Republican, July 9, 1870, p. 4; The Nation, July 9, 1870, pp. 1-2; Cincinnati Gazette, June 27, 1870, p. 1; Rudolph, "Chinamen in Yankeedom: Anti-Unionism in Massachusetts in 1870," p. 28; Miller, The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, p. 175.

91. New York Tribune, July 5, 1870, p. 1; Boston Commonwealth, July 9, 1870, p. 2. President Grant and Rev. Henry Ward Beecher also delivered speeches but said nothing on the Chinese.

92. Ibid. On Hawley's connections to the American Emigrant Company, see Erickson, American Industry and the European Immigrant, p. 163.

93. Congressional Globe, 41st Cong., 2nd sess., p. 5121 (July 2, 1870).

94. Ibid., pp. 5122 (July 2, 1870), 5152, 5159, 5160-61, 5168-69, 5175, 5176, 5177 (July 4, 1870); 5386, 5389 (July 8, 1870).

95. On the origins of Sumner's amendment, see Congressional Globe, 40th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 728-29 (July 19, 1867); ibid., 40th Cong., 3rd sess., p. 1159 (Feb. 13, 1869); ibid., 41st Cong., 2nd sess., pp. 5123 (July 2, 1870), 5154-55 (July 4, 1870). The quotes are from ibid., pp. 5123 (July 2, 1870), 5156, 5173 (July 4, 1870).

96. Congressional Globe, 41st Cong., 2nd sess., pp. 5123, 5124 (July 2, 1870), 5173, 5176, 5177 (July 4, 1870).

97. Ibid., pp. 5124 (July 2, 1870), 5149, 5161-62, 5171, 5175 (July 4, 1870).

98. Ibid., pp. 5125 (July 2, 1870), 5150, 5151 (July 4, 1870).

99. Ibid., pp. 5155-58 (July 4, 1870).

100. Ibid., p. 5385 (July 8, 1870).

101. Ibid., pp. 5163 (July 4, 1870), 5379, 5382-84, 5385-86, 5388-5389 (July 8, 1870).

102. Indicative of the Republican split on the issue, Radical Republican Ben Wade, former pro tem of the Senate, squarely endorsed the right to import workers while Charles Sumner opposed it. (On Wade, see Baum, "Woman Suffrage and the 'Chinese Question' in Massachusetts, 1865-1876," p. 73; on Sumner, see Congressional Globe, 41st Cong., 2nd sess.,

p. 4539 (June 17, 1870). For Senator Cameron's comment, see ibid., p. 5390 (July 8, 1870).)

103. Boston Commonwealth, June 25, 1870, p. 2; Springfield Republican, Sept. 24, 1870, p. 4; Cincinnati Gazette, July 9, 1870, p. 2; New York Tribune, June 18, 1870, p. 4, June 24, 1870, p. 4, June 30, 1870, p. 4, July 7, 1870, p. 4, July 28, 1870, p. 4.

104. National Anti-Slavery Standard, Aug. 21, 1869, p. 1, April 16, 1870, p. 3; George W. Julian, "The Coolie Traffic and the Land Question," National Standard, Aug. 6, 1870, p. 4; William Lloyd Garrison, "Hostility to the Chinese," New York Independent, Aug. 18, 1870, p. 1. (After ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment on March 30, 1870, the National Anti-Slavery Standard renamed itself the National Standard.)

105. Woman's Journal, July 16, 1870, p. 217; Lydia Maria Child (letter) in National Standard, Sept. 17, 1870, p. 5.

106. Woman's Journal, July 16, 1870, p. 221; James M. Ashley (letter) in National Standard, Oct. 1, 1870, p. 1. Phillips called Ashley's letter "simply atrocious." (National Standard, Oct. 1, 1870, p. 1.) On Ashley, see Clarence Edwin Carter, "James Mitchell Ashley," Dictionary of American Biography, I (New York: Scribners, 1943), pp. 389-90.

107. Child, (letter) in National Standard, Sept. 17, 1870, p. 5.

108. Springfield Republican, Sept. 24, 1870, p. 4.

CHAPTER 2

"WRETCHED PARODIES OF MEN" OR "OUR NOBLE CHINESE FRIEND"?

THE IMAGE OF THE CHINESE IN POPULAR CULTURE

DURING THE ERA OF EXCLUSION, PART ONE

"... the trouble is, Ah Chung, that this is not altogether a land of liberty, after all, and we must keep an eye out for the drift of public opinion and conform to it."

--Dr. Farley to Ah Chung, in Edward L. Wheeler, Seven Shot Steve, The Sharp With a Smile; or, Dan Garland's Great Clean-Up, Beadle's New York Dime Library (XLV:578), Nov. 20, 1889, p. 15

Background: Popular Culture and Earlier Writings

Chee Fee Ching-go, "a flat-visaged, almond-eyed, greasily-attired pig-tail," appeared in a single scene in Solid Sam, the Boy Road-Agent; or, The Branded Brows, a dime novel written by Edward L. Wheeler in 1880:

Evident it was that this precise pig-tail was the forerunner of more that were to follow, and a murmur of disgust went the rounds of the crowd.

"A gol-durned Chinerman!" grunted one miner. "I say, boys, who imported 'im 'ere? We doan't want none o' thet breed."

"On course we doan't," assented several others in a voice. "Wages is low enuff, as it is, wi'out any of them pizen cusses."

"Hurra! that's ther talk!" chipped in Black Eph, who now formed one of the crowd that had partially surrounded the Celestial. "Say, see hyar, you John Chinaman, don't ye know you're invadin' a Paradise that warn't nevyer intended fer pig-tails, an' sech like? You've got to bounce."

"Nixy! Chee Fee Ching-go no bouncee. Melican man no makee Chee Fee Ching-go bouncee!" the son of

Confucius declared, independently. "Melica free land--
Chineeman he heapee like Melica--go wheree pleasee."

"Waal, I'll be cussed ef we won't jest erbout see
ter ye durned almond-eyed, flat-snooted sucker!" Black
Eph cried, savagely. And he sprung forward and seized
the unoffending Chee Fee Ching-go by the collar, and
yanked him around unmercifully. "Bring a rope, boyees,
an' we'll hev er leetle pick-nick, jest as nice as ye
please, all by ther light o' ther moon."

A dozen miners hurried away in quest of the
desired halter, for it was down in their rough code
that a Chinaman was not fit for anything else but to
hang.

At once, Wyoming Walt, a young cattle-driver and the story's
hero, approaches.

"Hello!" he ejaculated, as his flashing eyes took
in the scene. "What's the matter? What are you a-
goin' to do wi' thet Chinaman, old man?"

"Hang 'im, by thunder!" Black Eph chuckled.
"Mebbe you've got some lip to chip in ag'in' it?"

"Mebbe I have," the herder declared coolly....
"What's the Celestial bin doin', that ye want to send
him up?"

"Nothin'--positively and precisely nothin'," Black
Eph replied, with a leer. "So what are you going to do
about it, my young gobbler?"

"I'm going ter persuade you to abandon all notion
o' stringin' up the Chinaman, I opine!" the young
herder replied, quickly whipping a pair of revolvers
from his belt and cocking them. "Take your hands off
from that Chinaman, and let him go, or I will put a
semi-colon right between your eyes, quicker than a
kitten can say its catechisms!"

"Cuss ye, d'ye mean it, you young popinjay?" the
ruffian demanded, fiercely.

"I doan't mean nothing else," was the reply. "The
Celestial hasn't harmed any one, and don't deserve to
be hung, or even molested. This is a free country, and
everybody has a right to go where they please "

A murmur of disapproval came from the crowd. It
was not to their liking, this interference

"See hyar, young feller, this ain't no fair
shake," he [Black Eph] growled, uneasily "Et's an
established fact that ther cussed Chinamen hev did more
to'rd fetchin' down wages than ary other race on ther
earth, an' et ain't nateral fer us laborin' class ter
love 'em for it, overmuch. Up ter date, we've kept our
town free from ther pesky devils, an' I'll be cuss

blamed ef we aire a-goin' ter let 'em swarm in an' cut us out o' our jobs. Ain't this so, boys?"

A grunt of assent from the miners, was the answer.

"On course et's so!" Black Eph averred, "... an' ev'ry mother's son o' ye in favor o' givin' ther pig-tail a boost, will make manifest by sayin' I!"

"I!" was the ringing response, from many a throat, "I!"

"Contrary no!" cried the young herder. "If you are in favor of hanging this Chinaman, I am not, and I'll drop the first man who attempts to boost him"

The crowd were waiting on Black Eph, for the decision, for one and all had long known him as a lawless leader in scrapes of this sort.

The crowd's attention is suddenly diverted by the voice of Nobby Nell, "the pretty post-mistress." Approaching with "a pair of silver-mounted revolvers in her hands," the young heroine shouts, "I'll blow the head off of the pilgrim who offers to harm the pig-tail, or the herder!" The confrontation then reaches its climax.

"Hang ther pig-tail," growled Black Eph, fiercely. "Nobby Nell don't run this yere town, ner she ain't got ther say, in this matter." ...

"Well, I do say it and I mean it," Nobby Nell replied, decidedly. "The young stranger is right. You citizens an' landmarks of Placer City haven't no more right to lay hands on the Celestial, than Solid Sam has to rob the stage. Let ther pig-tail go, boys, an' you'll sleep better fer not hangin him, tonight."

The words seemed to have an immediate effect, for the men mostly restored their weapons to their belts, and Chee Fee Ching-go was permitted to go his way.¹

Chee Fee Ching-go exits the scene and the novel, and is never heard from again. An incidental character, he helped introduce one major protagonist, Nobby Nell, and establish the conflict between two others, Black Eph and Wyoming Walt. Although little more than a convenient plot device, the Chinese man played a familiar role--that of innocent victim

--that late-nineteenth century readers of dime novel fiction knew well. A nearly identical scene occurred in Jesse C. Cowdrick's Silver-Mask, The Man of Mystery; or, The Cross of the Golden Keys (1884), a pulp novel set in New Mexico:

"Look 'e heur, boys [exclaimed Santa Fe Pete]; d'ye see these yaller varmints? Ain't it bad enough that we've got injun, Irish, Dutch, an' nigger, without havin' Chinees, too? Let's string 'em up, pards, we don't want no pig tails in this heur town."

A rush was instantly made upon the unfortunate Chinaman by several of Santa Fe Pete's followers, and they were roughly handled.

"No hurtee Chinaman! No hurtee Chinaman!" they yelled. "Chinaman klum washee-washee. No klum dig, klum washee. No killee me!"

Ropes are secured and placed around the necks of the Chinese. "Now then, boys," shouts Santa Fe Pete, "'let 'em dangle!'" As the lynching is about to proceed, a voice appears from nowhere. Silver-Mask, a mysterious stranger, proclaims the innocence of the Chinese and stops the hanging. The Chinese are released and disappear from the novel.²

In J.W.J. Todd's Arthur Eustace; or, A Mother's Love, a temperance drama from 1891, a wayward son travels west and ends up in a mining camp peopled by both European and Asian immigrants. The cast listing which synthesizes each role describes Sing Lee in three words: "Eats Dead Rats." He appears in one scene with Hans, a native German:

Chinaman: ... Me Chinees.

Hans: You git oudt! You ain't any more china than I am crockery.

Chinaman: Me Chinees! Me washee, cookee, playee pookie; see?

Hans: Say, you heathen Chinee, have you got anything to eat?

C: Yes; me velly muchee gotee stuff. Me play you one cent, two cent, three cent antee.

H: You can play your great uncle for all I care. (sees que) Py gracious! if the heathen ain't got a tail! Say, Chinee, where did you get dot?

C: Chinee velly madee! Chinee hotee! Breakee you all upee!

H: Look you here, Chinee, get me somedings to eat.

C: All rightee; come alongee. No; you waitee; I come velly muchee soon.

H: All right; now pring me some sauer-kraut.

C: Allee rightee. Me bringee Melica man plenty to eat.

Sing Lee exits and returns carrying a rat, which, the stage directions note, "can be made of bread." The scene builds to its climax:

C: Melica man he eat rats?

H: Get oudt, you pig tail! I don't eat rats; you eat rats.

C: Me eatee rats? No, me velly muchee likee rats. You eat him.

H: You heathen; I'll show you! Chinaman eat dead rats!

A fight ensues. Hans forces Lee to eat the rat, "all the time making grimaces as if the scene was too much for his stomach." Finally the scene concludes:

C: Rats velly good.... Chinaman like rats. Eatee head, tailee, backee, legs and allee.

H: Git oudt, you cursed heathen!³

This brief and gratuitous scene from an obscure nineteenth-century morality play published in Ohio included all the major Chinese stereotypes of the period. The Chinese immigrant speaks in exaggerated and demeaning dialect and eats food a European or American wouldn't touch. He is subservient, prepared to "washee" and "cookee" at a

moment's notice. He is silly, comical, and ready to fight. He also displays a fondness for poker and gambling.

Similar themes appear in "The Chineese Laundryman," a popular song written by well-known New York novelist and playwright Frank Dumont around 1880:

Me comee from Hong Kong Chinee
To work for de Mellican man,
Me no can talkee much english,
Me speakee you de best I can
Me workee all day in laundry,
For ching chong dat's his name,
Me catchee de rats in de market,
Makee potpie all a same ...

Me no go backee to Chinee,
Me doee welly well out here,
Me cheatee all melican gambler,
Me likee sour krout and beer,
Me soon becomee citizen,
And votee just like me please ...

Me soon gettee money very plenty
And wantee gettee nice littee wife ...
Me feedee her rice and opium,
Me buyee nice littee house,
For dinnee me fixee de rat-trap,
To catchee nice littee mouse
Good mouse! All same! Nice mouse!

This song was often sung by Charles Backus, a San Francisco minstrel singer. It was published in Philadelphia and presumably popular with audiences on both coasts.⁴

Not all songs and references to the Chinese in popular culture during the era of exclusion were demeaning. Some presented the Chinese positively, even heroically. "China," the courageous defender in Col. Prentiss Ingraham's dime novel War Path Will, The Traitor Guide; or, The Boy Phantom (1884), vanquishes outlaws and Mormons and rescues pioneer

settlers from danger.⁵ Other artifacts from popular culture appeared as invitations to the Chinese to America. Chicago music publishers Root and Cady gave permission to Beadle and Adams, a popular New York City publishing house known mainly for their dime novels, to reprint "John Chinaman" in an 1871 songster:

John Chinaman, dear sir,
Since you're making such a stir
In the waves that wash along our western strand,
Stop the jingling of your gong,
While we sing our greeting song,
As you gaze upon our broad and happy land.

John Chinaman, Esquire,
Though we really don't admire
All the oriental notions you may bring,
We have room enough for you,
And we've work enough to do,
And our nation's song of welcome now we sing.

The chorus followed:

Ho! John Chinaman!
Now, John Chinaman!
Leap o'er the crumbling wall;
Bring along your tea,
For don't you see,
We've room enough to welcome all.⁶

Eleven years after Beadle and Adams reprinted this verse, of course, America withdrew its "greeting song" and closed the gates to Chinese immigration. Was there a connection between popular culture--dime novels, plays, songs, poems, cartoons, advertisements, and children's magazines--and political consciousness in the United States? What in fact was the image of the Chinese in American popular culture east of the Rocky Mountains from the 1860s

to 1890, the era of Chinese exclusion? Did popular culture reflect and contribute to a climate of anti-Chinese racism? If so, could such a climate of racism have made exclusion inevitable? Can class-based differences relating to views of the Chinese be found in the various organs of popular culture such as pulp fiction and entertainment? These are the major questions that this and the next chapter attempt to answer.⁷

A similarly vital and more elusive question is who consumed popular culture. The audience for dime novels has never been definitively determined. Nineteenth-century commentators such as critic W.H. Bishop and dime novelist Frederick Whittaker claimed that readers of pulp literature were mainly farmers, mechanics, boys, and male and female laborers, or, more explicitly, "the lower classes." In 1937 Merle Curti, the first historian of the dime novel, agreed, calling the genre "a true 'proletarian' literature, that is, a literature written for the great masses of people and actually read by them." Albert Johannsen, on the other hand, argued in 1950 that dime novels were read by all classes of Americans, from bankers and presidents to bootblacks and tramps. Mary Noel, writing in 1954, called the audience largely "middle class." More recently, Henry Nash Smith has noted discrepancies between highbrow and lowbrow literature in the nineteenth century, but avoided making class distinctions.⁸

Michael Denning, in the most sophisticated examination of the question to date, follows Curti's contention. Denning agrees that pulp literature had a vast and varied audience but argues that dime novels were directed at a largely working-class public. "The evidence suggests," he writes, "that the bulk of the dime novel audience were young workers, often of Irish or German ethnicity, in the cities and mill towns of the North and West; and, that dime novels and story papers made up most of their reading matter." Rejecting Johannsen's "consensus" approach to the literature, Denning states that dime novels were not a part of middle-class popular culture. "The magazines were the key literary form in that cultural universe; its metaphoric centers were the 'self-made' entrepreneur and the 'domestic' household. The dime novels were part of the popular culture of the 'producing classes,' a plebeian culture whose metaphoric centers of gravity were the 'honest mechanic' and the 'virtuous working-girl.'" Contrasting the images of the Chinese in the dime novel with those portrayed in middle-class magazines tends to support Denning's conclusions. Many similarities existed and Chinese stereotypes often overlapped, but subtle and intriguing distinctions emerged in the two different types of sources. Workers, although they seldom wrote dime novels, nonetheless received a different message about the Chinese from that directed to their middle-class compatriots.⁹

The study of popular culture is problematic. Knowing what images were thrust upon consumers does not reveal what consumers thought of them nor how they interpreted them. Although we know that Americans paid money to read about how Wyoming Walt saved a Chinese immigrant's life or to watch Sing Lee eat a "rat" on stage we do not know whether audiences sympathized with Wyoming Walt's actions or believed Sing Lee's gastronomic habits indicative of Chinese immigrants. All we can glean is a composite if contradictory image. Popular culture presents a murky yet invaluable world for inquiry. Unlike newspapers and editorials which shaped news to sway readers' opinions, or politicians who crafted speeches to persuade voters, the motives behind popular culture are far less direct, the aims much less apparent.

Dime novels, plays, and songs aimed foremost to entertain rather than elevate, amuse rather than inform or educate. They spoke in an everyday, unrefined idiom. Relying on cliches and page-turning action, dime novel characters were quickly identified, seldom developed, and made easy to recognize by standard descriptions and phrases. Song rhymes were simple and unchallenging, the tunes always hummable. Popular culture was designed less to provoke thought than to thrill and to excite. Readers did not have to travel far to be transported from their living rooms, their front stoops, or their factory gates to distant

regions or earlier eras. Nor did writers. Edward L. Wheeler, author of Solid Sam, the Boy Road Agent excerpted above, as well as the hugely popular Deadwood Dick series, lived most of his life in New York and Pennsylvania and probably never journeyed much beyond the East coast. His geography and topography of the West was largely inaccurate. Wheeler was not unique. Most dime novelists lived in the East, and the major publishing houses were in New York City and Philadelphia. These prolific authors may never have encountered a single Chinese immigrant, yet such immigrants populated their books. Americans read about them for a nickel or a dime, or sang about them for free. Authors, song-writers, and entertainers relied not on research or fact but on stereotypes, formulas, and crowd-pleasing conventions. They created and mirrored images the public recognized and readily accepted. These images provide us with clues as to how Americans pictured Chinese immigrants. The ultimate significance of popular culture stems from its volume and sheer pervasiveness.

This chapter and the one following include many excerpts from artifacts of popular culture and will attempt to describe the overall picture Americans received of the Chinese, along with important exceptions. Americans paid enormous sums of money for this entertainment, and dime novels, plays, and songs flooded the nation. Popular culture was, if nothing else, popular. Looking at how

Chinese immigrants were portrayed may not reveal what Americans actually believed about Chinese people, but it will show the images and stereotypes that bombarded Americans day in and day out. Finally, it will allow us to contrast the different images of the Chinese within popular culture, and, in turn, contrast these images with those emanating from other sources.

Very few historians or scholars have studied the image of the Chinese in popular culture during the era of Chinese exclusion. The handful who have did not intend to analyze the impact of this image on national attitudes nor its relation to the larger political climate. In Ah Sin and His Brethren in American Literature (1933), William Purviance Fenn surveys poems, songs, plays, and fiction relating to the Chinese from the 1700s to the early twentieth century. He focuses heavily on Bret Harte who, he claims, "provided both the stimulus and the models for much later writing [on the Chinese]...." Harte was, indeed, important, but Fenn inflates his significance. Fenn also claims there was an "absence" of the Chinese from pulp literature: "aside from an occasional reference to Chinamen," he writes, "only a handful of dime novels dealt with them in any way." The Chinese, he adds, possessed "none of the characteristics of obvious courage, physical superiority, or dash which would have appealed to the reader of the dime novel." The

Chinese, he states erroneously, lacked "hero-caliber." Fenn did note that in many stories the Chinese were used more as scenery than as actors. They formed "shadowy and indistinct backgrounds for their main plots," he writes, often "moving noiselessly in the background...."¹⁰

Forty years later, Robert McClellan also examined how the Chinese were portrayed in the United States. In The Heathen Chinese: A Study of American Attitudes Toward China, 1890-1905 (1971), McClellan analyzes both factual accounts and fictional sources. The "impact [of the Chinese] upon American letters in total," he concludes, "was surprisingly slight," as "serious authors" gave them little attention. Up to the 1890s the Chinese in fiction were "undesirable characters" with few attractive qualities. The year 1894, however, "marked a turning point," and a more favorable image of the Chinese began to emerge. This improved image, he argued, was not across the nation at large but limited to "a small number of the better educated and more cosmopolitan members of society...." McClellan relies heavily on fiction by notable California authors such as Harte, Ambrose Bierce, and Frank Norris, on articles in respectable, middle-class journals, and on the correspondence of well-to-do men, missionaries, and diplomats. Echoing Fenn, he claims that the Chinese "rarely appeared as characters" in dime novels, and consequently he looks at none. He disposes with Broadway, the theater, and popular songs in less than a

page. The attitudes ultimately portrayed, therefore, are those of a highly select segment of American society. Popular culture is virtually ignored.¹¹

The most specific study of the subject is Limin Chu's The Images of China and the Chinese in the "Overland Monthly": 1868-1875, 1883-1935 (1974). Chu provides a thorough appraisal of all the articles, fact and fiction, relating to the Chinese that appeared in Overland Monthly (edited by Bret Harte) and the Californian, prominent literary journals of the Far West in the late nineteenth century. Chu's in-depth account presents a colorful tableau of Chinese subjects and characters in a wide variety of settings. The Chinese could be devious and exotic, they could be good, evil, and comical. Chu finds, interestingly, that before 1880, the portrayal of the Chinese tended to be "more judicious" and "realistic." With the passage of the Exclusion Act, however, attacks on the Chinese escalated and "almost drowned out" the sympathetic sketches. No overarching image or general stereotype emerges from Chu's microstudy. His kaleidoscopic analysis of these two San Francisco magazines captures some of the attitudes toward the Chinese held by a select literary group on the Pacific Coast. Dime novels, plays and East Coast literature, however, presented the Chinese quite differently.¹²

The fullest and most recent account of the Chinese image in American literature is William Wu's The Yellow

Peril: Chinese Americans in American Fiction, 1850-1940
(1982). Wu's study is a meticulous story by story analysis of many works of fiction with Chinese and Chinese-American characters. Wu writes that from the first wave of immigration in the early 1850s to the eve of World War II, "Chinese Americans were viewed as inscrutable, wildly excitable, of low intelligence, and of high and complex intelligence." The prevailing stereotypes in the nineteenth century, he adds, were that Chinese immigrants were "physically small, dirty, and diseased ... depraved morally, given to theft, violence, gambling, opium, and prostitution." They were also "sneaky and treacherous." Wu's focus on California fiction yields images partly in synch but more at variance with those portrayed in the broader terrain of American popular culture. Chinese immigrants in popular culture were indeed often small and sneaky, and addicted to opium and gambling, but they were seldom dirty, diseased, or depraved, nor were they much given to prostitution. Crucial elements of the Chinese image are overlooked in Wu's study. The pervasive stereotypes of the "grinning Chinaman" and his "childlike" behavior, for example, are not noted. Nor are the common comparisons to animals. The popular and vivid image of the Chinese as rat-eater is mentioned only in passing. On the flip side, heroic and positive portrayals are generally

dismissed as aberrations, and many are completely ignored.¹³

These studies all provide overviews but do not adequately depict the image many Americans held or encountered of the Chinese in the late nineteenth century. Neither Fenn, McClellan, Chu, or Wu fully assess the images and attitudes they have surveyed nor their impact on American consciousness and anti-Chinese legislation. Except for Fenn, they do not explore the images from the less refined works of art with which more Americans had contact. Popular culture remains largely unknown territory. These four scholars present intriguing glimpses and snippets but neglect the nuances and subtleties in personality and portrayal of the fictional Chinese immigrant. The aim of this and the following chapter is to present a more complete image of the Chinese in popular culture, to analyze this image, and determine how it relates to the political climate in the era of exclusion.

The Standard Image

The visual appearance of the Chinese immigrant in popular culture is rather uniform. He is diminutive, usually slender, and has "flat, homely features." His "yellow" skin varies from "olive" to "gold" to "the color of coffee and milk." He is alternately "copper-colored," "pumpkin-colored," or simply "discolored." His complexion

possesses the "usual yellow-brown tint," also described as "sickly yellow," with occasional references to jaundice. In Albert W. Aiken's Chin Chin the Chinese Detective; or, The Dark Work of the Black Hand (1885), a disguised white investigator convinces outlaws he is Chinese by revealing "a breast as yellow as saffron." More distinctive than skin color, however, are facial features. No cliché appeared more often than "almond-eyed" in physically describing the Chinese, and "almond-eyed Chinaman" became an almost indivisible phrase. "Almond eyes" are bead-like and have "bias-cut openings." Almond eyes are always little. Their feet are "box-toed," their noses flat, and their cheeks smooth. Certain features--ears, lips, and eyebrows--are almost never mentioned. The Chinese face is dull and unattractive, "as expressionless as a piece of highly-smoked dough." Not unexpectedly, after Wah Tom, a laundry worker, is described as "truly good-looking" with "features ... clean-cut and regular, and finely-molded," he turns out to be a white person in disguise.¹⁴

Hair style and dress round out the picture of the typical Chinese immigrant. All of them shave their scalps except for one small patch in the back. From this patch hangs a braided queue of long, black hair, often "gayly ornamented with ribbons." Like "almond eyes" and skin color, queues distinguish the Chinese from all other immigrants and naturally receive attention. "'Why are they

[the Chinese] like good actors?" Shorty asks his pal in the popular Shorty in Search of His Dad. "'Because they always take their--cues.'" Unless cut by hoodlums or shot off in a gunfight, no Chinese character ever appears without his queue. They are open game for ridicule. In the case of the easily terrified Wah Sing, for example, "His very pig-tail evinced a disposition to stand erect through fright." A Puck cartoon from 1881 pictured a misshapen Chinese wearing a queue ornamented with a dozen firecrackers in the place of ribbons. [See figure 2.1] Costume directions for plays invariably mentioned the queue, one instructing it be "made of twisted black cloth."¹⁵ Most Chinese immigrants did in fact wear queues, but the focus on this in popular culture served mainly to accentuate their strangeness and unassimilability.

Along with standard hair style comes standard clothing. The Chinese wear an oversized shirt or blouse and long baggy pants either drawn with a string at the ankles or tucked into wooden shoes or sandals. The pants vary somewhat in color--black, white, blue, yellow--but the shirt is always blue or white. He usually wears a straw or "battered white plug hat." One author introduced a Chinese character in one dime novel "clad in breeches and a semi-gown, with sandals upon his feet, and a slouch hat upon his head," and in another novel two years later "dressed in the inevitable



FROM THE OLDEST TO THE YOUNGEST NATION.

Figure 2.1. A grossly misshapen Chinese character sends firecrackers to Uncle Sam. Such distorted images appeared in even relatively benign illustrations.

Source: Puck, July 6, 1881.

white frock, pants and sandals." When in yet another novel he noted "a Chinaman ... clad in the style customary with his class," readers had little difficulty picturing the character. Nor did actors or directors. While some scripts specified "White pants, blue blouse, cue" or a "flesh-colored skull-cap" (to make the head appear bald), others simply noted "Chinese dress," "Chinaman's costume," or "the blue garments worn by Chinese immigrants." In Little Volcano, The Boy Miner; or, The Pirates of the Placers (1876), Joseph E. Badger, Jr., presented concisely the archetypal image of "John Chinaman," the Chinese immigrant: "The wash bowl-looking hat, the braided queue, the dough face lighted up only by the twinkling eyes, more piggish than ever, the coarse blue blouse, the baggy trousers--all proclaimed the 'John'...."¹⁶

What is the "John" like? He is, above all else, greedy for gold and for money. He would cook or wash or do anything for a nickel or a quarter. "In fact, whenever there is a cent to be made," one author wrote in 1881, "you may bet your boots that the Chinaman is on hand to make it." In play after play he is offering his services and advertising his prices. "Say, don't you want money?" a shyster insurance agent asks Hop Sing in L.L. Ware's Gyp, the Heiress; or, The Dead Witness (1892). "Yip! you bet!" Hop replies quickly, "wantee allee money can get." Tight-lipped Chinese could always be relied on to reveal a crucial

fact or clue if the price was right. Wau Wing reveals his secret for ten dollars; the unnamed "wily son of the East" in another novel reveals his for just one. In W.J. Hamilton's The Gulch Miners; or, The Queen of the Secret Valley (1867), one of the earliest dime novels with a Chinese character, Jan Ling is beaten up. He offers a white man five ounces of gold to thrash his assailant. Turned down, Ling raises the ante to six, "the offer of money [being] the greatest inducement that could be held out to himself."¹⁷

Always open to any bribe, the typical Chinese is "ever on the lookout to add a few dollars to his hoarded wealth." If rewards are posted he is the first to pursue them, if money appears he is the first to grab it. When "Miss Millie held out her hand" to We Wailo in William R. Eyster's A Sport in Spectacles; or, A Bad Time at Bunco (1884), "the Chinaman, without a word, extended his, pocketing the five dollar gold piece with such rapidity that Pete scarcely saw the coin as it passed between the two." The mere sight of money excites the Chinese. In one story Ho Sham receives fifty dollars. "'Oh, bullie! bullie!' he exclaims, hopping up and down in his delight. 'Me skippie likie kitty-cat....'" Most Chinese characters are more reserved but still cannot conceal their glee over receiving money. In Albert W. Aiken's Rocky Mountain Rob, the California Outlaw; or, The Vigilantes of Humbug Bar (1873), "The eyes of the

heathen glistened as his fingers touched the gold-piece." Sometimes the Chinese love for money is simply pathetic. In Bret Harte's play, Two Men of Sandy Bar (1876), Hop Sing, the Chinese laundryman, has only nine lines. Half of them have to do with money. Act II closes with Sing "extending [his] open palm," asking for money from the prostrate body of a man who has fainted. The Chinese, presumably, would beg money even from the sick and dead. Money made everything all right; it was more important than pride or pain. In Peter Pad's Shorty in Search of His Dad (1881), a Chinese laundryman is struck with a hot iron. The assailant throws him a dollar--"more than he could earn in two days"--and the coin "evidently obliterated all thoughts of pain." In William R. Eyster's Seven Shot Steve, The Sharp With a Smile; or, Dan Garland's Great Clean-Up (1889), Ah Chung is pummeled and nearly lynched by a wild mob. Rescued at the last moment, he then flees the town. His benevolent employer tracks him down to thank him and give him his back pay. He hands Ah Chung "not only a month's wages, but a gratuity that made him open his eyes, and almost wish for a necktie party every week." This inordinate love for money even explains the stereotyped Chinese wardrobe: "He had his own ideas of how clothes ought to fit, as every Chinaman has, and so he got them all a mile too big for himself, probably because he wanted to get all he could for his money."¹⁸

Avarice and greed were by no means unusual or negative qualities in Gilded Age America. The slick hustler and man on the make were common enough characters among the white population in plays and dime novels. What distinguished the Chinese character, however, was his single-minded lust for money to the exclusion of all else. "In truth," wrote Peter Pad, "a Chinaman never seems to form any social or friendly ties, and is ever ready to go anywhere to better his condition, leaving behind everything that other races of beings would cling to." The dime novel Chinese is constitutionally unable to curb his insatiable, innate drives. Lacking a code of honor, he can play by different rules and perform deceitful acts a white man would think twice about. For a hundred dollars, Lung Chee helps a dangerous prisoner escape from jail. "The word money," Frank Dumont wrote in Blue Blazes; or The Break O'Day Boys of Rocky Bar (1880), "always thrilled the Chinaman's heart. He would have sold his grandmother and all his relatives into the bargain for 'Mellican silber.'" The Chinese immigrant would stop at nothing--not even murder--to make a buck. In Charles Townsend's The Golden Gulch (1893), a man offers One Lung a dollar to douse a man's head, and two dollars to beat him up. "Lemme see," answers One Lung, counting on his fingers, "Soakee head, one dollee; kickee stuffin', two dollee." Then, looking up, he exclaims, "Say --killee dead fo' five dollee."¹⁹

Bound by neither conscience nor Christ, the Chinese would murder, steal, and lie in the quest for gain. "'I w'u'dn't believe ther heathen on a Bible oath,'" says one desperate character. "'These yellow dogs lie in their sleep,'" says another. "'Trust an Injun or a Celestyal?'" exclaims a third. "'Great ham-bone; I'd as soon trust my old goat.'" One character even questions whether the Chinese can distinguish between true and false. "'The truth ain't in you,'" says Silver-Plated Sol to Sing-So, "'or if it is, it sticks tighter than a burr.'" A key tip-off that Wah Tom is really a white person in disguise is a hotel clerk's comment, "'You are about th' first strictly honest John that I ever fell in with.'" Honesty is practically enough to unmask a Chinese.²⁰

In accordance with these traits, the Chinese are notorious and dangerous gamblers. Scene after scene depicted them playing cards and invariably cheating.

In the scene that ensued
I did not take a hand,
But the floor it was strewed
Like the leaves on the strand
With the cards that Ah Sin had been hiding
In the game 'he did not understand.'

This image from Bret Harte's immensely popular "Plain Language from Truthful James," reappeared frequently on stage and in print.²¹ In Augustin Daly's Horizon, an Original Drama of Contemporaneous Society and of American Frontier Perils (1871), Chineese, who has all of three lines, is seen playing poker with six aces. Almost thirty years

later, Win Lung, a character in Bernard Francis Moore's Poverty Flats (1899), challenges Dan Duffy to a poker game and draws seven aces. Chinese play cards in Townsend's The Golden Gulch and J.E. Cowley and Wilson T. Bennette's Crawford's Claim; or, Nugget Nell, The Pet of Poker Flat (1890). In the latter, Ling Ling asks Mike Moore, an Irish lawyer, to "play poken." "Divil a poker," Moore responds. "I played poker with you last night, and you kept poking nothing but deuces and trays at me every time you dealt." Moore suggests playing forty-fives, another card game, and gambling-hungry Ling Ling agrees. "But, mind you," Moore warns, "... don't ye hold out the ace of hearts or the five fingers on me either." The Chinese simply do not lose at cards. In The Boy Scouts of the Sierras (1881) a Chinese gambler whose name is never given wins three hundred dollars. In Rocky Mountain Rob (1873) white ruffians get so angry when they suspect but cannot prove that the Chinese are cheating they burn down the entire Chinese settlement. An old gambler recounts a tale of "'a heathen Chineese'" who hid cards everywhere and had to be turned upside down to make the cards pour out. The "wily Chinese" became a familiar character in song and on stage:

This cunning old chap, from the nation of flow'rs,
Would cheat as you couldn't believe:
He'd 'go for' the game with the aces and bowers
He'd manage to hide in his sleeve.

"The heathen," Albert W. Aiken wrote in Red Richard Man From Red Dog; or, The Brand of the Crimson Cross (1883), "was

well-known to be a most desperate and determined gamester." The message was clear: neither trust nor play with the Chinese. As one character comments sarcastically: "'I'm skeered of your luck, John.'"22

This reputation for deviousness follows him wherever he goes. In Edward L. Wheeler's Deadwood Dick's Three; or, The Bellerin' Bull of Bismarck (1887), the treacherous Wah Lee runs an opium joint where thieves frequently gather. Deadwood Dick offers him good money to hide a kidnapped girl. Lee, "the last man to lose a chance to make 'a big stake,'" readily agrees and shows Dick and his gang the underground chamber where he will hide her. On the tour, however, Lee suddenly turns the tables by locking them all in the room. The double-crossing Lee hopes to demand even more money. "'That infernal pig-tailed rascal,'" Dick curses, but as every reader knew, trickery and deception were part of the Chinese immigrant's natural tools. Concocters of secret potions and poisons, they would as soon slip someone as sell someone a dose. One gun-toting Chinese immigrant steals a bottle of poison and when detected claims he was only borrowing it. "'That's jest ther way wi' one o' them almond-eyed galoots!'" explains a crusty old character. "'Nevyer know'd one yet as wouldn't steal ther eye-winkers out o' a buzzard's eyes an' sell 'em fer tooth-picks.'" By means nefarious or shrewd, the Chinese would swipe anything. Ho Sham, a Chinese valet, spends his time on an ocean voyage

performing tricks and "sleight-of-hand" feats, conning passengers out of "watches and other articles." As one observer remarks, "'Ho Sham ... he was well named all right for his business.'" The valet is also the subject of the following conversation between two boys:

"Goin' ter teach him any tricks?"

"Well, for that matter I dare say he knows tricks enough now, and possibly he can teach us all some of them."

"If he can't he's no 'John,' for sure."²³

Nimbleness and speed enable the Chinese to avoid detection as "masters of the hocus-pocus." They "crept cautiously" and snuck up "noiselessly." Or they "wormed along" in "serpentine style." You never know when they are around. Without warning, Chough Lee's face "suddenly arose ... silently as a ghost." He approaches without a sound, like "the dropping of feathery snowflakes." Later his companion turns to question him, but "the Celestial was gone, had vanished as silently as had been his coming." This eerie, almost supernatural quality makes the reader suspicious, uncertain, never sure when a Chinese character will appear or whether one was lurking about. We Wailo "quietly slipped away." Lee Sing moved with "the stealthy step of a ghost." Wing Lee when he was through "silently glided away." Like a shadow, the Chinese appear, disappear, and leave no trace. Such people are unpredictable, untrustable. Even their plain, large clothing is a disguise filled with secret recesses and hidden folds. Bad Lung

carries a bowling pin unseen somewhere "under his flowing ... Celestial coat." Chin Chin conceals an unknown quantity of objects inside "some mysterious pocket in his voluminous upper garment." The Chinese move furtively, swiftly, almost invisibly. As one character observes, "'These Chinese thieves would steal the lashes off a dog's eye while he winked, and the cur would never see him.'"24

In harmony with their fluid, slinking movement is a face as impenetrable as granite. "Clever Sam Yung," for example, is described as "crafty ... shrewd and scheming.... There was a sharp, cunning expression to his features, too, which was sufficient proof that he was not as dumb as he looked." The person underneath is hard to discover. The "quaint manner" and "placid and patient" exterior belie an active, churning mind. "I will never again believe," says one character, that "the heathen Chinees are as simple as they look." The Chinese uses his face as yet another tool to disguise hidden motives. As Sep Winner's song, "The Coolie Chinees" (1871), went:

He had the most innocent kind of a look
That anyone ever did see;
But he'd "shut up your eye" by hook or by crook,
This terrible Coolie Chinees.

Even if he appears just for a moment, the Chinese character does something to suggest distrust. Wing Wing, for example, a thoroughly extraneous character in Col. Prentiss Ingraham's Kent Kingdon, The Card King; or, The Owls of the Overland (1888), still manages to give "a sly wink." Chough

Lee exhales "a low, oily chuckle." China possesses a "cunning leer upon his face."²⁵

Cunning is a key word in the depiction of the Chinese. Wah Sing is "'a cunning rascal,'" Cherub has "a cunning, mischievous" look, and "a cunning light appeared" in the eyes of Hop Hi Gee. Cunning and craftiness, like avarice and deceit, are inborn Chinese characteristics. Chug, a whiskey-drinking, opium-smoking, self-admitted coward, still possesses "rather a crafty expression of countenance, not uncommon with Celestials found in the mountains of the West." One author noted offhand that his Chinese character possesses "the remarkable cunning of his race." The Chinese are practically defined by their cunning, and their almost mystical ability to live by their wits. "'You'll never break that bank!'" a fortune-teller informs a patron in regard to a Chinese gambling den in Rocky Mountain Rob. "'The Chinamen know too much for you!'" Still, the fortune-teller counsels against discouragement. "'Call back to your memory the history of the intercourse of the Western nations with the so-called barbarians of the East,'" she says prophetically. "'In cunning the East has always beaten the West, and yielded only to the strong right arm of power. Here, amid these mountains, the story of the past will be repeated.'"²⁶

Chinese cunning is apparent if not detectable through one predominant facial expression: the grin. Nearly every

Chinese is presented grinning. Sometimes he displays a "sickly grin," sometimes it's a "benevolent grin." Some grins are "good-natured," others are "crafty." Wing Wing's grin is "broad and complacent," Chough Lee's is "sleepy" and "innocent." Wah Tom's is merely "weary." One Chinese grins "deprecatingly," another grins "like an ape." Different characters--Ching Ling, Chin Chin, and Tom Wah--all grin "from ear to ear." Grins are "huge" and "expansive," even "enormous." Characters were introduced as "the grinning Mongolian," the "grinning Celestial," and "the grinning little Chinaman." For variation, they "simper" or "smirk." To convince his audience that Chin Chin, a disguised white man, is really Chinese, the author depicts him grinning on more than a dozen different occasions. Like Lewis Carroll's Cheshire cat, the grin is almost a fixed feature on the Oriental face. Whatever else happened, "The Chinaman ... grinned as usual." There he stands, "still smiling." More than thirty dime novels made sure to note it, and grinning was the most common direction for Chinese characters on stage.²⁷

What purpose did the Chinese grin serve? It seldom expresses happiness or love. Nor does it suggest enjoyment or good humor. Only a few Chinese characters actually ever laugh.²⁸ Rather, the grin is a natural mask, hiding true intentions. Grinning people need not be taken seriously; nor can they be trusted. A grin can indicate cleverness and

secretiveness: it is an expression both beguiling and unsettling. It is also demeaning. Sam Yung's grin is both "gorgeous" and "ludicrous." Chug's is simply "ludicrous." Wau Wing's is "idiotic," as are We Wailo's and Hop Hi Gee's. The Chinese grin never looks dignified or noble; rather, it makes Chinese characters look silly and interchangeable. "There is no use in attempting to describe him," one author commented, "for all Chinamen are so much alike, that you have to know one from another by study and observation of them, in order to see in what respect one of them is more comical and ridiculous than another."²⁹

The grin is also an expression associated with children, and authors used it to belittle the Chinese character. "But he smiled as he sat by the table," Bret Harte wrote, "With a smile that was child-like and bland." This phrase entered common usage and frequently provided the basic, initial description of any Chinese character. Lee Sing wears a "smile, childlike and bland"; so do Chin Chin and Hop Hi Gee. Authors occasionally cited the source--such as the Chinese character in Major Dangerfield Burr's Velvet Face, the Border Bravo; or, Muriel, The Danite's Bride (1881) whose "face assumed that 'childlike and bland' expression so well depicted by Bret Harte"--but more often than not the reader's knowledge was assumed. From childlike grins and childlike expressions come childlike behavior. In one play two Chinese servants are called "a nuisance": they

fight like buffoons, kick, throw water, and run into each other like children. Hop Ski, a laundryman at a boys' school, does little more than play juvenile pranks on students, and gets reprimanded by the headmaster. In story after story, Chinese immigrants play the fool, are the butt of jokes, and frequently get into mischief--not danger, but "mischief." Ho Sham, the oceanbound trickster, acts more like a mascot than a valet. Not only is he "ornamental," but even "the servants were continually having fun with him, all of which he took in his usual good part. Indeed, he always appeared to have just as much fun being sold and put about as those who sold him; this was always his way...." As Shorty puts it, "'what was he born a Chinaman for if it wasn't for fun?'"³⁰

Underlying this infantilized portrayal of the Chinese is an essential degrading of their manhood. They lack the manly virtues of forthrightness and self-control. When given alcohol or opium, "they never stop voluntarily." The "Chinaman never stops a thing of this kind until he is utterly helpless." They simply crave alcohol: "'fer drinkin' whiskey,'" one character says, "'ye ken't beat 'em.'" Novel after novel, play after play, the Chinese swig liquor with abandon. "Whiskey, rum, gin or brandy, it is all the same to a Chinaman. They regard the whole lot as 'ginnie.'" They steal drinks and take drinks in secret--they seldom drink at a saloon like men. When sober, the

Chinese perform menial labor, mainly washing and cooking, commonly considered "women's work." Their faces are smooth, unbearded, and soft. They possess "feminine" qualities such as meekness, timidity, and docility. They were, in dime novelist Philip S. Warne's words, "wretched parodies of men." Their loose-fitting garments and "fluttering skirts" suggest female attire. "The gentle, lamb-like Chinaman," one 1873 song went:

The sweet, soft, yielding Chinaman.
The weak, tea-drinking Chinaman,
The shallow-thinking Chinaman;
The unassuming, unpresuming
Rice-consuming Chinaman.³¹

The juvenile, effeminate portrait of the Chinese contrasted with the emphasis on male qualities in the late nineteenth century. As Daniel P. Rodgers has shown, "manliness" and "masculinity" had particular salience in Gilded Age America; to be called "manly"--strong, rugged, virile, forceful--was a high and esteemed compliment. "A definition of manhood itself," Paula Baker has recently written of men and politics in this period, "consisted of characteristics desirable in good citizens and partisans." The infantilization and emasculation of the Chinese contributed to their image as physically truncated, not fully developed, not quite male or adult. Such irresponsible, childlike people would deserve neither citizenship nor the vote.³²

The attack went deeper. Not only were they denied their manhood, they were often denied their humanity. The Chinese are frequently compared to animals. They are called "piggish," "wolfish," and "eel-like." Wing Lee is "weasel-faced," Jan Ling is "'monkey-faced.'" Chin Chin has "yellow, paw-like hands." One Chinese is called a "'flat-nosed gosling,'" another one is "'dumb as an oyster,'" and a third is "'like a big yellow frog.'" A group of them live in "'a rabbit-hutch,'" others are "little above the grade of cattle." Collectively they are "'California tadpoles.'" The Chinese hair style further evokes the imagery. One queue resembles "a black snake." More often it suggests a tail. Wang Ti runs off "wagging his tail behind him." The only mention of a Chinese character in Mrs. Orrin James' Old Jupe: or, A Woman's Art (1867), is during a fire when a "poor Chinaman" is "pulled out of his little shop by the tail of his head...." In another story a character calls one Chinese immigrant a "'kangaroo-tailed ... cat-eyed ... baboon.'" Most insidious, perhaps are the connections to insects. One character is compared to "a lively flea." Others appear "swarming out of their huts and tents like ants from a hill." The Chinese mining camp is "a veritable bee-hive." Cartoons reinforced this imagery. One drawing shows them as hornets, another as locusts sweeping across the nation. [See figure 2.2] Other cartoons depict them as dogs, monkeys, and vampire bats.³³



THE CHINESE PLAGUE.—Page 306.

FARMER KNICKKNACKER.—What shall I do with this darn'd locust horde? They'll eat up all my labor crop!

Figure 2.2. In one of the most insidious cartoons of the period, the Chinese are portrayed as insects sweeping across the nation to gobble up jobs. Note that the shape of the "Chinese plague" forms an outline of the United States.

Source: McGee's Illustrated Weekly, April 3, 1880.

Chinese speech and movement also have animal-like overtones. Seldom do the Chinese appear talking or speaking, rather they are "jabbering," "chattering wildly," or "mumbling in higgly-piggly gibberish." Hong Wing "chatter[ed] like an ape," and a group of "Celestials ... chattered ... like so many geese." Ah Sin possesses a voice "so high pitched" that it sounds "like the chattering of a frantic monkey." When Tiger Dick approached a Chinese settlement, "His ears were assailed by a magpie chatter." One Chinese character is told to "cease ... squeaking." Chug "grunted," while Chin Chin grins "as the dog does when he snarls." Animalistic movements accompany animalistic sounds. Wah Sing "splashed about like a drowning cat" and Bad Lung "lay in the middle of the floor like a stranded fish." Wau Wing "moved like a wildcat." When a group of outlaws dress up as Chinese immigrants, they make sure to emit "a jabbering cry" and move "like the scudding of a flock of geese." Different actions resemble different creatures. In one story the Chinese "capered about ... like a lot of frightened monkeys," then "scurried away ... like a covey of startled pigeons," and finally "huddled together ... like squirrels in a warren." Another group of Chinese "were huddling together like sheep." One scene described them as "bobbing" and "ducking"; later they "flocked about."³⁴

The Chinese individual did not walk. Instead he would "hop," "jump," or "prance." Ah Chung enjoyed "frisking around in the kitchen," whereas Lee Sing "came ambling into the saloon." We Wailo skipped everywhere he went: he "skipped away to attend his duties," "skipped in from the door ... and pranced toward Blockey," "came skipping up," "came skipping into view," and "skipped" behind a table when he wanted to hide. When in a rush, "the little Chinaman" could be seen "trotting." The Chinese are ever "hurrying about briskly" and "dancing about." Ah Chung enters one scene "with a hop, skip and jump, after the usual manner of progression employed by his race." The Chinese bow and flourish in exaggerated gestures, seldom moving in a manly, humanlike fashion. So standard is this active, animalistic stereotype that actors had to be advised against hamming up their roles. "One Lung is the customary stage Chinaman," one stage direction noted. "In playing this character do not overdo it. The Chinese are not jumping jacks, remember; therefore play the part rather quietly." Another play, George M. Baker's New Brooms Sweep Clean, a farce from 1870, described Jim Jimalong who "stands grinning ... with the forefinger of each hand pointed up a la Chinese." The same phrase--"Points forefingers up ... a la Chinese"--appeared in other plays, in which the Chinese nodded and bobbed his head. This demeaning pose with two fingers pointed upward resembling the paws of dog begging became identified with

the Chinese character. Such condescending images made the Chinese look not just outlandish but pathetic and one-dimensional.³⁵

References to animals were not simply scattered or occasional, they were ubiquitous. A Chinese could hardly be described without being compared to an animal. Such comparisons, of course, need not be demeaning. One can be praised for possessing the courage of a lion, the strength of a bear, or the wisdom of an owl. In Captain Mark Wilton's Silver-Plated Sol, The Montana Rover; or, Giant Dave's Fight With Himself (1884), Sing-So possesses the reflexes of "a tiger." Favorable analogies, however, were exceedingly rare, and comparisons usually hovered around rodents and smaller mammals. The best the Chinese could be was "spry as the cat" or "Cunning and tricky as the fox." Another possesses the "agility of a squirrel."³⁶

In the most peculiar transmogrification of all, the Chinese became what they allegedly ate: cats, rats, and dogs. Although dime novelists seldom depicted the Chinese eating rodents or felines, playwrights delighted in showing them consuming these creatures or having other characters tempt them with "fricaseed rats." Popular songs played on this theme with equal vigor. "For dinner he gave us our little pet cat ..." ran one lyric, "Our supper he made from a cussed old rat." Another melody, "Sung with immense

success" by Hooley's Minstrels, included the following lines:

Take a little pussy cat and a little bow-wow
Boil 'em in a pot, stew wit a little mouse.

Some say pig meat makie goodie chow chow
No muchie largie too muchie small,
Up sky, down sky, down come chow chow
Down come a pussy cat. Bow wow and all.

Magazine and newspaper cartoons graphically portrayed the Chinese eating rats, and the rodent-consuming foreigner became one of the most popular, increasingly familiar, and enduring images of the late nineteenth century. A Protestant minister from Pittsburgh recalled as a child seeing a slide show in a Sunday school program to promote foreign missions. One of the slides, he remembered, pictured

a Chinaman reposing on a couch, when suddenly there emerged from the gloom a monster rat, whereupon the Chinaman opened his capacious jaws, and the rat aforesaid made a wild plunge down his throat. Soon another rat appeared and disappeared in like manner, and another, and still another. We youngsters screamed with delight, and kept encoring the performance, so that the 'professor' was obliged to curtail the Biblical features of the programme in order that we might feast our eyes on the rat-eating Chinaman.

The image of rat-eater, which so amused this classroom of Pennsylvania children, also pervaded the world of advertising. A Chinese man with mouth opened wide poised to consume a rat appeared on a trademark for a New Jersey chemist. [See figure 2.3] A smiling Oriental also helped sell the wares of a New Jersey exterminator. [See figure 2.4] Manufacturers even named products after them. The



Figure 2.3. With mouth agape, a Chinese man prepares to eat a rat. This advertisement was used by a Jersey City, New Jersey, chemist to sell rat poison.

Sources: Hal Morgan, Symbols of America (New York: Viking, 1986); Jamily Alray, "Rough on Rats": The 1887 Dream Book & Almanac. A Facsimile of the Original Edition (New York: Random House, 1971).

Good Luck Liniment Company of Sabetha, Kansas, manufactured a poison in the 1880s called "Chinese Rat Destroyer." "They devour it eagerly," its advertisement boasted, confusing and combining rat-eater and rat. [See figure 2.5] The Chinese eat rats, and shake like rats. One Chinese character is even named "Rats." They eat cats and creep like cats. They eat dogs and act like dogs. Ki Lee moved "with a cat-like step" but "shrunk back like a poodle." Ah Sin is "as placid as the cat" but gives a look "as a dog might have [when] wag[ging] his tail." Wah Sing has eyes that glow "'like a cat.'" Chin Chin has a "purring, cat-like way." Human merged with animal, eater with food-source. In one of Puck's grislier cartoons, a Chinese immigrant ship approaches America. The Chinese jump off the boat as rats and arrive on shore as men. They are pictured simultaneously as rodent and human, metamorphosing seemingly at will back and forth. [See figure 2.6]³⁷

This animal imagery in all its guises served various purposes. Mainly it succeeded in making the Chinese look different, subhuman, and inferior. Minimizing their humanity justified harsher treatment against them. Dogs could be whipped, cats kicked, and insects swatted--likewise the Chinese. Rats could be exterminated, why not the Chinese? Identification with animals further distanced them from white, Anglo-Saxon Americans, and made them appear more primitive and uncivilized. They were the lowest of



Figure 2.4. This logo was used by a Paterson, New Jersey, exterminator.

Source: Hal Morgan, Symbols of America (New York: Viking, 1986).



Figure 2.5. The Good Luck Liniment Company of Sabetha, Kansas, used the above advertisement to attract customers.

Source: Hal Morgan, Symbols of America (New York: Viking, 1986).

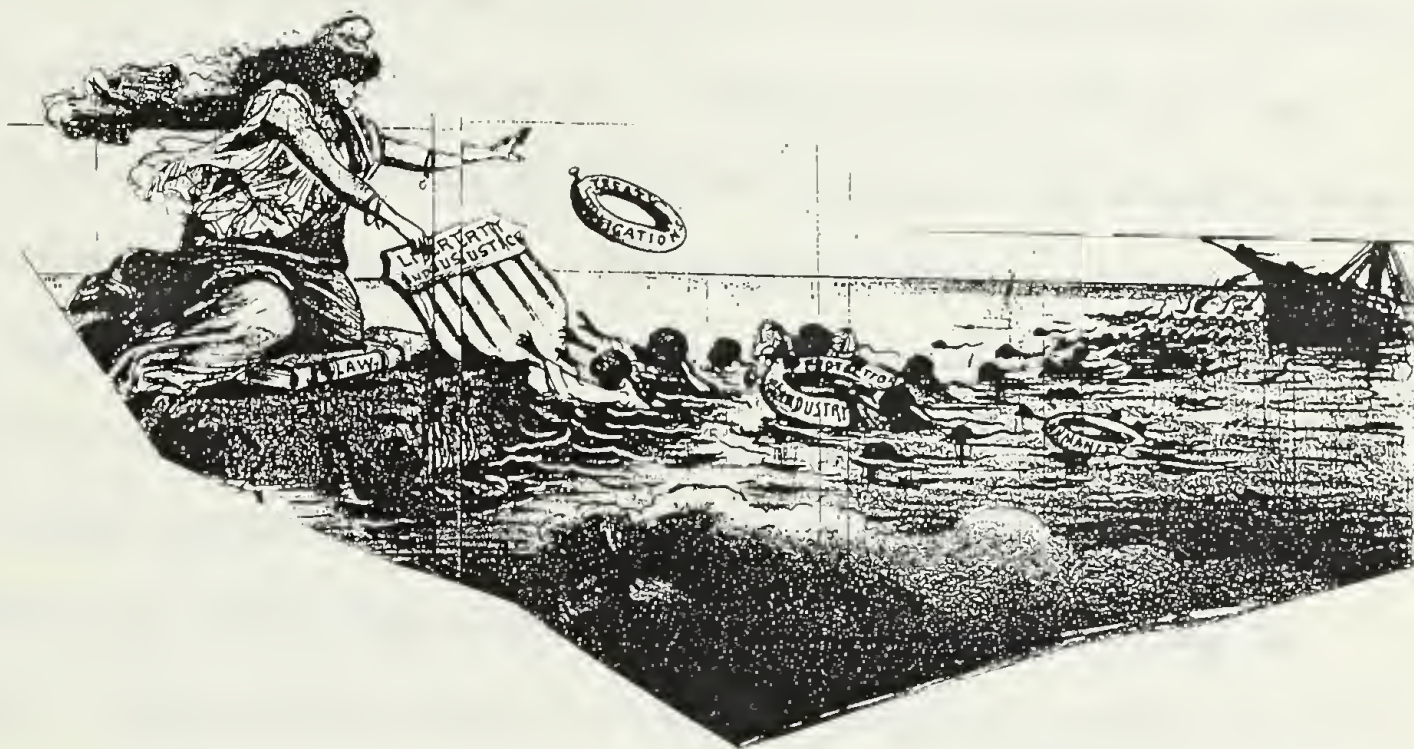


Figure 2.6. Are the Chinese jumping off the boat rats or men? It's hard to tell.

Source: Puck, March 17, 1880.

carnivores eating both pets and rodents. Comparisons to insects converted them to pests, robbed them of individuality, made them all look alike. As Jean Baker has shown, blacks were also portrayed in the nineteenth century as childish and animalistic. They too ate animals low on the food chain which suggested both less cultivated tastes and arrested development. These stereotypes underscored the idea that both races--black and Chinese--needed management, supervision, and the uplifting influence of whites.³⁸

These graphic images of the Chinese as quasi-human, mascot-like creatures lent support to those seeking to exclude them from American shores. But the picture so far presented is far from complete. Americans also received other messages in popular culture that prevented the grinning, cunning, rat-eating "Chinaman" from becoming an all-consuming archetype. Mixed in with the negative imagery were human, empathic, and even noble Chinese characters. Such characters countered the common stereotypes. Authors, in fact, revealed a split personality when portraying the Chinese: in description, whether by the narrators or the fictional characters themselves, the Chinese fared poorly; but in action Chinese individuals appeared positive and strong. They possessed enviable, admirable qualities. They could even, on occasion, emerge as heroes and champions. To focus on just the negative and more shocking portrayals would distort the total image Americans encountered.

Analyzing other visions reveals a mixed and complex message that makes problematic any neat comparison or assumption of a causal relation between popular culture and anti-Chinese racism.

The Alternative Image

Dime novels seldom have non-whites as heroes. The ideal character is a rugged, tough, American male ready for adventure and prepared to fight. Blacks, Mexicans, Indians, and Jews appear sporadically but rarely play major roles. At best they are sidekicks to the white Anglo-Saxon star.³⁹ Likewise with the Chinese. A notable exception, however, is Philip S. Warne's Little Ah Sin; or, The Curse of Blood. A Tale of Ranch Life.⁴⁰ [See figure 2.7] This dime novel from 1885 shows that within the circumscribed world of ethnic stereotypes, a Chinese immigrant could break through as a heroic figure. Accused and abused by misguided whites, Little Ah Sin, the title character, perseveres and ultimately prevails. Although somewhat comical and even ludicrous--the understood parameters--Ah Sin is brave, intelligent, and intrepid. He also saves the day.

The novel opens in Denver, Colorado. Edith Vernon, a winsome, young woman, has come to live with Abednego and Mercy Swayne, friends of her deceased father. "Uncle" Abe,



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5 Cents.

No. 431.



Figure 2.7. With pistol cocked, Little Ah Sin dominates the cover of this 1885 dime novel. Even though he embodies many of the familiar Chinese stereotypes, he still emerges as a genuine hero.

Source: Philip S. Warne, Little Ah Sin; or, The Curse of Blood. A Tale of Ranch Life (New York: Beadle's Half-Dime Library, 17:431, October 27, 1885).

whose middle name is "Strong-in-the-right," and "Aunt" Mercy are fanatically religious Christians. They have two children: Jerusha, a sweet, little girl; and Jack, a ne'er-do-well, renegade son. Edith is accompanied on her journey to Denver by the youthful Ah Sin, her escort, helper, and servant, whom she had rescued from "a rabble of young hoodlums'" in San Francisco.⁴¹

The rather byzantine plot begins with Jack greeting Edith at the train station and criticizing her for bringing such "Luggage" as Ah Sin. Edith strongly defends her Chinese companion, and Jack is smitten by her headstrong manner. Abednego promptly arrives, dismisses his son, and enters a carriage with Edith and Ah Sin. He, too, criticizes the Chinese immigrant whom Edith again defends. Uncle Abe appears both threatening and haunted, "the oddest-looking man she had ever seen." He repeatedly calls himself a sinner and utters oaths on hell, damnation, and the wrath of God.⁴²

After a two-day carriage ride through the mountains, the party is held up by a gang of masked outlaws. One of them is Jack in disguise. The apostate son hopes to secretly kidnap Edith; then in daredevil fashion rescue her himself and thus win her heart. Ah Sin, however, foils the plot. When Jack demands Edith accompany him, Ah Sin pulls out his knife and revolver, and threatens to kill him. Jack, unafraid, seizes Edith by the wrist. Ah Sin

immediately fires in the air. Frightened, Jack suddenly lets go, and he and the terrified outlaws retreat and run away.⁴³

The threesome continue onward and finally arrive at the Swayne home. Despite the "icy atmosphere" of the household, Edith tries to settle into family life. Mercy gives her a small room in the attic while Ah Sin sleeps in the stable. The only bright spot in the "weird household" is Jerusha. The adorable little girl is the pride of the family. She and Ah Sin soon "became fast friends, and after a time it was noticed that they were frequently off alone together." Abednego and Mercy become suspicious of the "heathen" Ah Sin and follow them one day. Ah Sin has led Jerusha to a cave, the inner walls of which he has illuminated with torches. The Swaynes enter secretly and behold their daughter praying to a clay idol representing "a Chinese Joss." Aghast, Mercy screams and grabs Jerusha. Abednego, emitting "a yell of insane fury," destroys the image and seizes Ah Sin. He takes Ah Sin's knife and drags the young man home. Mercy recommends burning him at the stake. Abednego prefers torture. He strips Ah Sin to the waist and ties him by the wrists to a hitching post. With "a long black-snake whip" he lashes him relentlessly. Ah Sin's back bleeds and welts. Mercy bursts into hymns of praise as ranch hands gather round to watch.⁴⁴

The whipping continues until Edith is alerted. She interposes her body between Abednego and Ah Sin. She receives one lash and her uncle stops the punishment. Edith rebukes Abednego and then berates the ranch hands for allowing such a spectacle to proceed. Jim Stebbins, one of the hands, apologizes, and promises to protect Ah Sin in the future. As Edith denounces her demented uncle, Jim releases Ah Sin to her care. She dresses her companion's wounds and takes him to her bed to nurse him. "He went to sleep holding her hand, and gazing into her face with a piteous gratitude that brought tears to her eyes."⁴⁵

Several days later, Edith and Jim are out at a dance. Renegade son Jack enters the house secretly and demands money from Abednego. Father and son argue and then fight. Jack grabs Ah Sin's knife (which Abednego had kept), stabs his father, and flees. Mercy, recognizing her son's voice, screams and faints. From the barn, Ah Sin hears the commotion and dashes to the house. He finds Abednego bleeding but still alive. The old man rises and commands Ah Sin under penalty of death never to reveal what he has seen. Abednego then disappears into the wilderness. Ah Sin follows him, then returns home and slips into bed.⁴⁶

Edith, Jim, and the other ranch hands appear shortly. They discover Mercy's prostrate body and the pool of blood nearby. The ranch hands at once suspect Ah Sin of murdering Abednego in revenge for the whipping, and their finding his

knife and footprints seals his doom. The men grab him from bed and carry him to the local magistrate to stand trial. Edith, confident of Ah Sin's innocence, confronts her now conscious aunt. Crazed by the evening's events, Mercy starts raving and accuses Ah Sin of murder. Edith in disbelief goes to visit Ah Sin in prison. He protests his innocence, but fearful of Abednego's threat, does not reveal the truth.⁴⁷

The trial begins a few days later. "From the first," wrote the author, "it was plain that every one, even to his Honor, had prejudged the case." Mercy testifies against Ah Sin, but hallucinating, alternately accuses both him and Jack of the crime. Ah Sin defends himself by insisting that Abednego was never killed. No body, after all, had been recovered. Still, "All the testimony went dead against the prisoner." The jury convicts Ah Sin of murder and he is sentenced to be hanged.⁴⁸

That night Edith figures out her uncle's plot. In his maniacal hatred of paganism and the Chinese immigrant, he had concocted a scheme to fake his own murder and frame her young Chinese servant. "'[T]hey will hang him without stopping to investigate,'" she surmises. "'Then if uncle Abe returns, it will only be a 'heathen Chinee,' and no one will care.'" Edith runs to Jim and informs him of her thoughts. He disputes her wild story, but out of growing love for her, agrees to help. He offers to rescue Ah Sin

from prison. Edith is delighted, and Jim rouses some pals to assist him. They proceed to the jailhouse and break in through the window. The constable awakes and guesses the intruders have come to lynch the prisoner. "'Whar's the use o' doin' this thing irreg'lar,'" he says, "'when the heathen's goin' to hang anyhow? Can't you keep yer shirts on fur a few days?'" Putting up no fight, the constable points to his keys and allows them to abduct Ah Sin. They take him to the mountains, give him food and weapons, and tell him to flee.⁴⁹

Meanwhile, Edith has noticed that several times Mercy has slipped out secretly in the middle of the night and not returned for hours. Guessing she has gone to rendezvous with Abednego, Edith follows her. Deep into the mountains she tracks her. At last she finds Mercy meeting not with her husband but with her son. Edith overhears Jack describe the stabbing of his father. Playing on his mother's loyalty and guilt, he demands money from her, and the two argue passionately. They are about to exchange blows when moonlight reveals Edith's presence. Instantly Jack turns and, with rage in his eyes, seizes the virginal Edith. She stands petrified by the fear of rape. Then, "coming she knew not whence, Little Ah Sin suddenly appeared at her side, with a cocked revolver leveled at Jack Swayne's heart." Jack, remembering Ah Sin's actions in warding off his attempted holdup, screams and jumps back. "He had had

one taste of Little Ah Sin's metal. Something told him that that other shot had been a scare, but that this one would 'mean business.'" Jack releases Edith, mounts his horse, and disappears into the night.⁵⁰

A sobbing Edith throws her arms around her protector. A confident Ah Sin leads her back to the house. "Upon reaching it, he without fear called all the hands of the ranch about him by firing off his revolver." His innocence established, Ah Sin demands they follow him into the mountains. The intrepid hero directs them all to a cave where the crazed Abednego has been living as a hermit. Near death, he reveals to Edith the "Curse of Blood" that has long since haunted him. Many years earlier he had accidentally killed her father. He and Mercy never told anyone, and racked by guilt, became deranged religious fanatics. Abednego then dies, his head on Edith's lap. The novel ends with Mercy committing suicide and Jack becoming a famous outlaw. Edith adopts Jerusha. The last line, however, belongs to Ah Sin, who proudly tells everyone how twice by himself he fought off the notorious Jack Swayne.⁵¹

Ah Sin is unquestionably an unlikely hero. He possesses many of the common Chinese stereotypes. He wears the standard Chinese outfit and pigtail, and speaks in the usual demeaning accent. He is diminutive, "almond-eyed," and "sickly yellow." He is variously described as "shrewd,"

"'clever,'" "'quick,'" and "'neat.'" He is also "placid" and "quaint," possesses "Oriental docility," and is forever smiling "with the blandness for which his countrymen are noted."⁵² And yet he is bold, brave, trusty, and loyal. He handles weapons deftly, is regularly armed, and is pictured on the novel's cover brandishing a cocked revolver. He and Edith are the only major characters portrayed positively, and they exhibit a warm, deep (though asexual) affection for each other. Three times Edith risks danger to save Ah Sin--from San Francisco ruffians, from Abednego's lash, and from prison walls. Twice Ah Sin risks his life to save hers. This close symbiotic relationship infuses the novel and defines the stature of the fearless Chinese immigrant.

Perhaps more important is Ah Sin's ability to rise above the author's own prejudices. Warne himself calls Ah Sin a "heathen Chineese" and describes his religious idol as "a hideous representative of a Chinese Joss." Ah Sin prays not "to the true God," Warne noted, but "to some hideous wooden image ... represented possibly by an equally ugly amulet hidden beneath his clothes." Indeed, Ah Sin's attempt to convert the innocent, little Jerusha to paganism in a dark, hidden cavern forms one of the most lurid scenes involving a Chinese character in all of popular culture; it encapsulated the deep-seated fears of Christian America at the specter of a Chinese invasion. Despite this, the author

clearly defended Ah Sin. "He had human feelings as keen as those of any of us," Warne wrote, as the demented Abednego shattered Ah Sin's idol. "To him his god was as dear and reverend as was Abednego Swayne's to him. He experienced the same sense of sacrilege at seeing his Joss contemned and dethroned by the rude hand of the unbeliever."⁵³

Contrasted with Abednego's rigid fanaticism stands Ah Sin's tolerance. "'I have all along looked with misgiving upon the introduction of the heathen into our country,'" rails Abednego. "'A worshipper of Belial! An abomination in the sight of the Lord! A fire-brand in a household of God's servants! ... let us not poison our own homes with their baneful presence.'" Ah Sin, however, "seemed to have none of this religious prejudice." Ah Sin never once criticizes Christianity or the strict piousness of Abednego. He kneels with the family at prayers and bows his head during grace. Contrasted with Abednego's base motives and dark character stand Ah Sin's high morality and deep humanity. The novel is hardly a muckraking call for open immigration--Philip Warne was, after all, the same author who had called the Chinese "wretched parodies of men"--but the themes of respect and pluralism inform the plot. As Edith puts it: "'I'd pit his paganism against their Christianity, any day!'"⁵⁴

Like the author, the reader comes to sympathize with Ah Sin. The warped characters, Abednego and Mercy, and the

evil character, Jack, all loathe him. The "good" characters, Edith and Jerusha, befriend and love him. Jim becomes a likeable character only when he promises to protect Ah Sin from danger. This black-white dichotomy puts the reader squarely in Ah Sin's camp. Sympathy for Ah Sin reaches a crescendo when he is wrongly arrested and charged with murder. Warne heightened the tension by referring to "the strong bias of prejudice against him." In the West, the author explained, "A heathen Chinese accused was a heathen Chinese guilty." The constable's indifference to Ah Sin being abducted to be lynched, along with the fact that "no one [in town] entertained the thought" that Ah Sin had been rescued rather than taken to be hanged, reinforced the accepted antipathy toward the Chinese. "It was generally agreed that he had been 'taken care of' by friends of the supposed murdered man, for whom the ordinary process of law was too slow. So, after a flimsy show of search, the matter was dropped."⁵⁵

Against this backdrop of anti-Chinese racism, Ah Sin emerges as a hero, a veritable "heathen champion."⁵⁶ He and Edith are the voices of right and the forces of justice. Single-handedly Ah Sin twice overpowers his white foe. Cast in the stereotyped Chinese mold, he is nonetheless a rare individual triumphing over the prejudice of his time. Little Ah Sin; or, The Curse of Blood. A Tale of Ranch Life is a typical action-packed dime novel replete with

bloodcurdling moments, clear-cut characters, and deeds of violence and derring-do. By presenting an alternative to the popular image of the greedy, devious, rat-eating "Chinaman," it tempers the assumption that this era was one of strident and unrelenting racism. The Chinese immigrant has redeeming, even enviable qualities.

Ah Sin is not alone. His fellow countrymen, while seldom receiving top billing, play crucial roles in the dime novel. Perhaps the most heroic Chinese figure in all of nineteenth-century popular culture appeared in Col. Prentiss Ingraham's War Path Will, the Traitor Guide; or, The Boy Phantom (1884). Unlike the slender, diminutive Ah Sin, "China," as he is called, is strong, muscular, and intimidating. Everything about him is large. He is "taller than the average of his race by far," Ingraham wrote, with "his great broad shoulders" and "his head surmounted by a black sombrero with a broad brim." China is unusual. "Certainly he was a remarkable-looking individual," Ingraham concluded, and "his face was an attractive one." To complement his powerful physique, China, like Ah Sin, carries on his person numerous weapons: "About his waist was a belt of arms, two revolvers and a long-bladed knife, and at his back hung a repeating rifle." China carries yet another weapon in a manner perhaps unique in American literature. "His hair was worn according to the style of his countrymen, in one long pigtail behind," Ingraham noted,

"and to the end was tied a revolver which swung to and fro as he moved like a pendulum." China is not afraid to use the weapons he carries. He had once killed a miner in self-defence. He then went into hiding, and he lives secretly inside a monument in a graveyard in the Rocky Mountains.⁵⁷

China does not appear until more than halfway through the novel but he plays a vital role in the plot. From atop a tree he witnesses a holdup. Young Guy Marsden and his mother, recent pioneers from Kentucky seeking a lost mining claim, are attacked by three outlaws. The mother is killed instantly, the boy left for dead. China climbs down and finds Guy still breathing. He extracts the bullet, dresses the wound, and applies a soothing ointment. He carries the boy to a nearby cabin, and cooks him a hearty meal of rice and venison. Under China's steady care, Guy slowly recuperates. Suddenly the three outlaws reappear. "There was blood in China's eye," Ingraham wrote, "and he meant mischief" The heavily-armed China seizes his weapons, shoots two of the outlaws to death, and stabs the third one in the heart.⁵⁸

China then constructs a rope hammock, and in "his strong arms," carries the boy on a long trek in search of the Marsden family. At last he finds them. "'We have certainly been blessed, after all our sorrows,'" the grateful father says at the novel's conclusion, "'... and we owe our preservation to our noble Chinese friend, whom I love

as though he were my brother....'" In the somewhat anticlimactic epilogue, China still fulfills a lowly fate; he stays with the family to do "odd chores," and accompanies them back to Kentucky.⁵⁹

Huskier and more imposing than Ah Sin, China is a fearsome figure and genuine fighter. His brute strength and sharp, survival instincts place him in a class with white dime-novel heroes of the period. Although he possesses "the traditional cunning look" and "childlike grin for which his countrymen are so noted," China's "Chineseness" is not emphasized.⁶⁰ Rather, Ingraham injects him as a deus ex machina to save the day. Mormons and miners are the "bad guys" of the West, not the Chinese. China possesses few of the demeaning qualities normally attributed to his brethren; he has adapted to western ways and western rules. He is a solitary but partially assimilated Chinese immigrant. Even more than Ah Sin, he is a strong and noble individual.

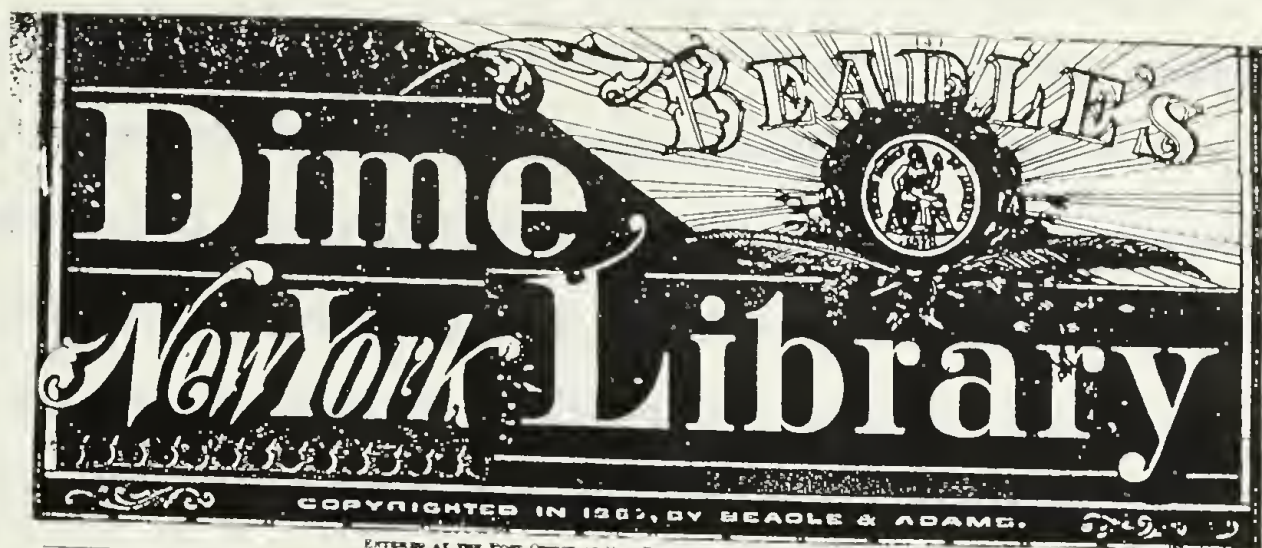
China and Ah Sin are unusual but by no means unique Chinese characters in dime novel literature. In countless stories the Chinese defend themselves, associate closely with whites, and are agents of their own destiny. Sam Yung, John Lee, and Wau Wing each carry guns; Lee Sing brandishes "heavy revolvers." All four fire whenever necessary. Bad Lung, on the other hand, is "like a warrior bold." He arms himself not with a gun but with a massive bowling pin which he hurls or swings at oncoming assailants. "In that crowd,"

the author wrote, "the Chinaman had his say, and no one molested him as he trotted home with his ten-pin under his arm." Numerous Chinese display skill at hand-to-hand combat. Jan Ling "would do his part well" when it came to fighting, and Lee Sing "had given ample proof that, when put to the test, he could fight" as well as an American man. John Lee "knew a few points about the manly art" of boxing, and challenging a white man to combat, he "rained a perfect shower of stinging taps upon the American's face." When another Chinese immigrant, Wau Wing, "who had wits for four," is captured by two outlaws, he knocks them both down and escapes.⁶¹

In Captain Mark Wilton's Silver-Plated Sol, The Mountain Rover (1884), Sing-So has a snore described as "weird, startling and resonant." The Chinese immigrant possesses "muscles of iron" and fights like "a full-blown cyclone." An accomplished wrestler, Sing-So "turned on Sol like a tiger, and caught him by the throat with a grip which bade fair to crush everything between his fingers." In Wilton's Horseshoe Hank, the Man of Big Luck; or, The Gold Brick of Idaho (1884), Wah Ho throws Horseshoe Hank over a cliff into a rushing river. Hank survives, as dime novel heroes always do, and seeks revenge. Wah Ho, "a somewhat remarkable man," and Horseshoe Hank go at it again in a long, tough, drawn out fight. With his "steel-like arms," Wah Ho pounds Hank brutally and Hank pounds him back.

"Never before," the author noted, "had he met such a foeman." Hank had always "looked with scorn on the children of the Orient and considered himself capable of whipping their best man with one hand, but in ... Wah Ho he found a power only equaled by his skill." The struggle continues. Hank gains the upper hand and Wah Ho stops fighting only when his bones are finally broken. "'Oh! you rib-cracking heathen!'" Hank exclaims, "'you'll knock the rag right off the American flag and make the British lion roar in the key of G!'" Wah Ho loses, as the Chinese fighter usually does. But more importantly, he fights in the language the American respects: brawn and muscle. He fights on their terms in their country. With his fists and firearms, the Chinese challenge the white protagonist and participate in the rockem-sockem western drama. They are not merely wily and cunning, but fierce and fearsome.⁶²

The Chinese are often treated with respect and become the confidants and companions--if not true equals--of whites. Lee Sing attaches himself to Dick Talbot, "the only Christian who had ever done him an act of kindness." Along with Mud Turtle, an American Indian, and two whites, Lee is part of Talbot's inner circle in Shasta Bar, California. Together Talbot and his "four faithful friends" gamble, fight, and defend one another from outsiders. The novel's cover picture presents Lee in a determined, straightforward pose. [See figure 2.8] In Edward L. Wheeler's Cinnamon



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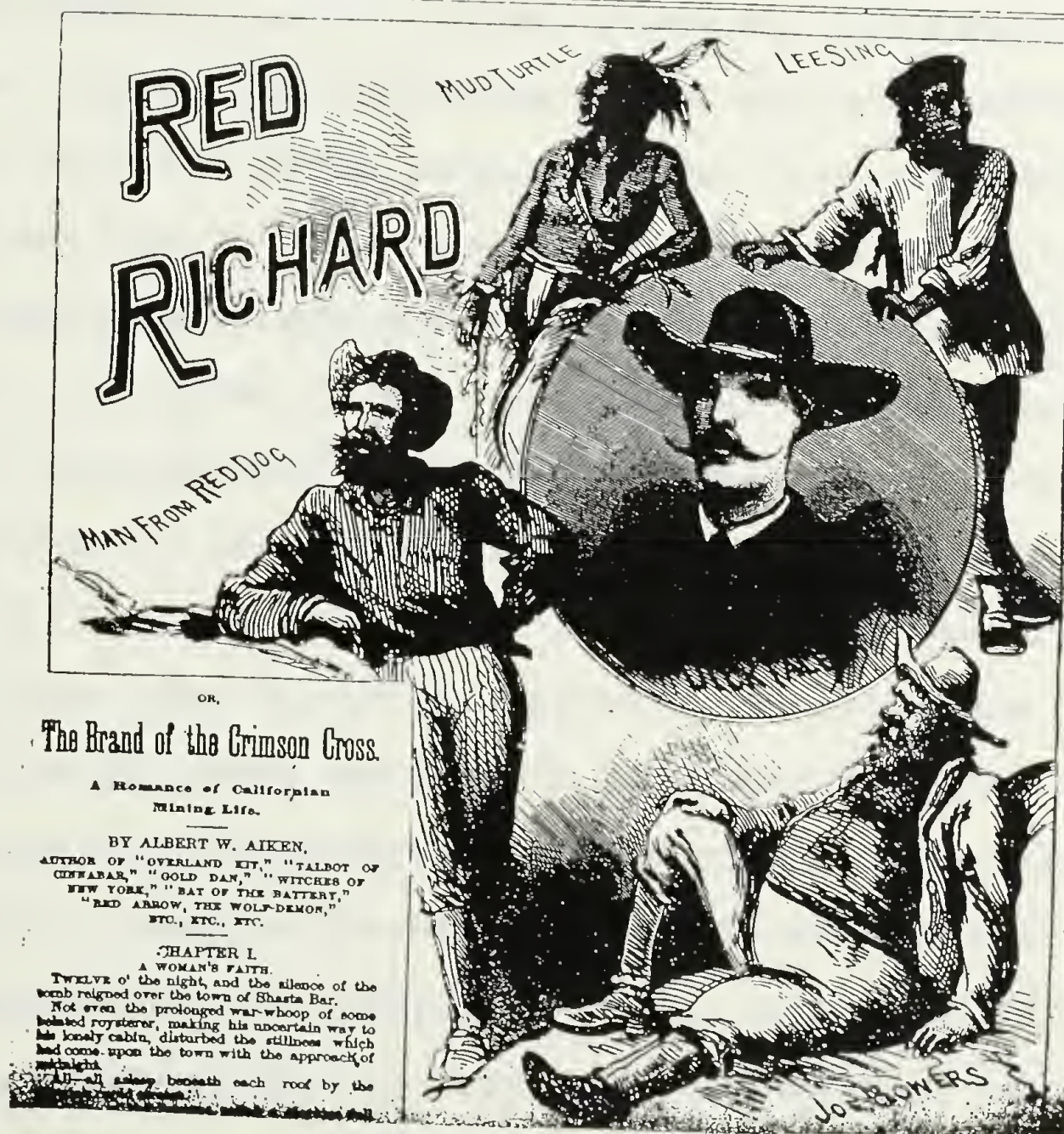


Figure 2.8. Lee Sing--confident and manly--strikes a pose. Chinese immigrants often featured prominently and positively in the dime novel.

Source: Albert W. Aiken, Red Richard, Man from Red Dog; or, The Brand of the Crimson Cross. A Romance of Californian Mining Life (New York: Beadle's Dime Library, 28:354, August 5, 1885).

Chip, the Girl Sport; or, The Golden Idol of Mt. Rosa
(1879), Pigtail Pete is part of a similar, though less law-abiding, gang of four. The gang, which includes "'a nigger, a Dutchman, and the Chinaman,'" is run by Captain Mayburn. In admiration of his fighting abilities, the Captain refers to Pete as the "'roaring equinoxyull thunderstarm o' Chiner.'" The bowling-pin-wielding Bad Lung develops a close relationship with Gentle John. He refers to the Chinese immigrant as his "'pard,'" western vernacular for partner. Gentle John calls him "'ther squarest heathen in Nevada, ter sw'ar to it. You can't fool him, an' nobody can't fool him.'" After the two heroes fight the forces of evil, the novel concludes with them together attending the wedding of a mutual friend. Reappearing in another story, the two are separated in Colorado during the course of their adventures. At the end Gentle John claims he is heading to Nevada to find his "'durnation leetle Chinaman, named Bad Lung, [who] waits fur me.'" Similarly, Pinnacle Pete swears he will never desert Wau Wing, his Chinese companion. Story after story provide instances of interethnic cooperation and solidarity. Despite the stereotypes, the Chinese still come across as human and humane individuals, capable of forming alliances and friendships with white characters.⁶³

Perhaps even more significant was the length to which dime novelists went to sympathize with and defend the Chinese--or, let the Chinese defend themselves. Although

forbidden by law in certain Western states from testifying in court, the Chinese appear in various trials in fiction. In Aiken's Rocky Mountain Rob, the California Outlaw (1873), a gang of outlaws plot to steal gold dust from a camp of Chinese miners. "'The heathen ought to be cleaned out, anyway ...'" says one gangster. "'They've no business, taking the bread out of the mouths of honest white men.'" The outlaws raid the camp. Unable to find the gold, they string up the leader of the Chinese on a stake. They proceed to torture him by slowly burning his feet. He writhes and screams in pain but refuses to disclose the gold's whereabouts. As the flames leap higher, the Chinese captive finally manages to wriggle free and escape. The outlaws track him down and knife him to death. They then cut off the queue of every Chinese miner and torch their camp. A white posse is formed to capture the outlaws. "'Ef they had only robbed the 'Johns' of their dust it wouldn't have been so bad,'" says one of the more virtuous members, "'but when they came to roastin' 'em in a fire by inches, it's too much for decent white men to stand. I 'low that I don't keer much for the heathen ... but this hyer b'ilin' last night is too much.'"⁶⁴

The posse apprehends the outlaws and the novel climaxes with their trial. The Chinese are asked to testify. They are reluctant. One finally comes forward "very unwillingly. His experience with the Melican man had not been

particularly pleasant," the author noted, "and had led him to look upon the whole white race as foes and oppressors." Nevertheless he testifies. So does another. Both present incriminating evidence. As the outlaws appear increasingly guilty, their attorney rises. "'I protest against this testimony,' yelled the lawyer, indignantly. "'Is the life of a white man to be sworn away by ... a Chinaman?'" The answer, quite bluntly, was yes. The testimony stands and the outlaws are convicted. The author's sympathies, and by implication the reader's, are with the Chinese, "the simple, hard-working sons of the Flowery Land." Although hardly beloved by the author, the Chinese are presented as the wronged, innocent party.⁶⁵

The Chinese also testify on stage. In Poverty Flats (1899), Win Lung witnesses a murder. Jim Turner, the hero, is falsely accused. In court the judge permits Lung to testify. The gathering crowd, indeed, demands it. "Tell the truth, pig-tail," they chant, "or we'll lynch you." Lung rises to the occasion. He identifies the two real killers, and they are both convicted and sent to prison. One of them later escapes and in revenge attempts to kill Marion, Jim's fiancée. The killer pulls a knife and is about to stab her when Lung suddenly appears with "a cocked revolver." He shoots the killer to death. "Oh, Win," shouts Marion, "you have saved my life." The judge agrees. "The Chinaman," he says, "has done his work well." Lung

later shoots himself in the foot by accident and hops around the stage. Part hero, part buffoon, the Chinese could be an object of both humor and admiration. "When it comes to downright common sense," says a grateful Jim, "I'll back Win Lung against any man in the camp, bar none." Marion agrees: "we should never be tired of returning thanks to Win Lung and the land he came from."⁶⁶

Time and again the Chinese are portrayed as sympathetic characters and those who dislike them as mean, rascally creatures. In the two scenes excerpted at the beginning of this chapter, from Solid Sam, The Boy Road-Agent and Silver-Mask, The Man of Mystery, the Chinese are introduced as innocent victims of a hostile white mob. The mob and its evil leader want to lynch the Chinese for no reason, but forces of right interfere at the last moment to save them. The Chinese then disappear from the stories having served their purpose: by the attitudes shown toward them they have distinguished the good characters from the bad. Ding Dong, a Chinese steward, performs a similar function in Prentiss Ingraham's The Born Guide; or, The Sailor Boy Wanderer (1886), one of the rare adventures of the high seas to feature an Oriental character. Bradford, the evil sailor, abuses Ding Dong and orders him to perform dangerous tasks against captain's orders. Dong obeys, but Fox, the good sailor, protects him. Bradford attacks Fox and the two sailors fight. Dong pulls a knife and helps rescue Fox.

The captain arrives and chews out Bradford for disobeying orders and abusing the Chinese. Bradford is punished; he later drowns. Dong, however, plays no more role in the novel. He exists only as a device to highlight the evil of the man who hates him.⁶⁷

In novel after novel, the Chinese-hating characters are invariably the "bad guys." In Wheeler's Apollo Bill, The Trail Tornado; or, Rowdy Kate from Right Bower (1882), Chin Chin is a good person who comforts passengers after a holdup on a stagecoach. He is later vilified and threatened with death by Modest Mike, a "bullwhacker, bruiser and ruffian-general." Novelists condemned such bullies who abused the Chinese as "inhuman hoodlums." Philip S. Warne's Silver Riffle Sid; or, A 'Daisy' Bluff (1886) echoed the plot of Aiken's Rocky Mountain Rob, the California Outlaw (1873). Chinese miners have worked a successful lode and mean-spirited whites intend to steal it. An armed posse storms the camp and threatens the Chinese. Fearing for their lives, the Chinese flee and seek protection from a benevolent family:

"Oh, this is shameful," cried Nora, with generous indignation. "Father, can't those vile ruffians be driven out and these poor fellows [the Chinese miners] be protected in their rights? Gerald, you have men enough under you to see that justice is done."

But Gerald stood silent and grim.

It was his father who replied for him sadly.

"My boy's heart is in the right place," he said, with his gentle pride in his son. "But how many men could he get to stand at his back in defense of the heathen."

"Lord! Lord!" he went on, in a lower tone ... "but they put us arrogant Christians to shame!"

Gerald tries to help, but "Public opinion," the author noted, "was unanimous against him. In the abstract, the thing was a bare-faced theft, of course; but the pagan had no rights that a Christian was bound to respect." Many chapters later, however, right ultimately triumphs. The "'vile ruffians,'" as Nora termed them, are arrested, and the Chinese reinstated in their claim.⁶⁸

A more flagrant example of vigilante action and discountenanced anti-Chinese sentiment appeared in Seven Shot Steve, The Sharp With a Smile (1889). Looking for work, Ah Chung arrives in Broad Ax, a town that forbids the employment of Chinese immigrants. The Farley family, however, newcomers to the region, need a cook and consider hiring him. Chung cooks a trial meal which impresses them all. Still they are reluctant. As one family member remarks, Chung is qualified but could easily be "'scared off by the hoodlums of the town.'" "'It is ten to one,'" adds another, "'that there is an indignation meeting being held [right] now.'" Nina Farley, the novel's heroine, pleads Chung's case. "She had heard of the Chinese question," the author noted, "and that the West was coming to the conclusion that the Chinese must go." Nonetheless, she implores her father to hire him. Dr. Farley remains opposed. He addresses Chung directly. "'I am sorry to part with you,'" he tells the Chinese cook, "'but you must go

[and leave Broad Ax].... men of your race are not allowed to remain within its borders.... There will be a necktie party organized in no time ... as soon as your presence becomes known.'" Chung insists he is not afraid and can take care of himself. "'That's not so bad for an uncivilized heathen,'" Dr. Farley responds, "'but while you are taking the risk we will be getting the worry.... the boys will be burning the house over our heads. They must have some fun, you know.'"69

Despite these comments, Dr. Farley finally relents and hires Chung. Sure enough, townsfolk get wind of the news and an angry mob forms. "'I am afraid,'" one character says, that "'Ah Chung is in for trouble.... a rough by the name of Crockly has been organizing a gang of tough citizens.'" As one townsman explains, "'The law in Broad Ax says that any Chinese gentleman found in its limits is to be shot on sight, or otherwise executed....'" The novel reaches its climax as the mob barbarically hunts down Chung. "The yelling, the shouting, the cursing," the author wrote, "resembled a phonogram from pandemonium." "[B]ullets ... whistled" past the fleeing Chinese immigrant who is at last captured. The mob pummels him and prepares to hang him. Nina, Dr. Farley, and their entourage appear in the nick of time. They urge the mob to disperse and spare Chung's life. "'Stand by me,'" one of his defenders shouts, "'and law and

order!" A fight erupts and Chung, in the end, slips away.⁷⁰

Several points in this novel stand out. Ah Chung is innocent and has every right to work in Broad Ax. Right and wrong are clearly delineated. The Farleys are the force of good, the mob an incarnation of evil. As the voice of reason commands at the end, law and order must ultimately triumph, though not without a struggle. Nationally, of course, the law did triumph. The Chinese had been legally excluded from the United States seven years before the novel was published. While not referring to this law directly, the author did inject a few opinions of his own. He described Broad Ax's anti-Chinese law as an "obnoxious statute." When the Farleys hire Chung, he noted wryly that "For the present the un-civil service reformers of Broad Ax were to be defied." This play on words prepares the reader for subsequent references to the anti-Chinese mob as "'hoodlums,'" "'boys,'" and "'gang of tough citizens.'" No doubt exists that the author condemns the mob and that attempting to kill Chung is wrong. As in Silver Riffle Sid, right-minded people must defend the Chinese. They needn't love them nor even like them, but they must protect and support them. The difficulty of this in the face of overwhelming prejudice was apparent. "'[T]he trouble is, Ah Chung,'" Dr. Farley tells his Chinese cook, "'that this is not altogether a land of liberty, after all, and we must

keep an eye out for the drift of public opinion and conform to it.'" Farley still hires Chung and later helps rescue him. Despite his words, he is, like the author, challenging rather than conforming to, public opinion.⁷¹

These episodes reveal that dime novelists were familiar with the racial conflict between white and Chinese on the West Coast. They tapped such confrontations because of their inherent dramatic appeal. Surprisingly, the novelists seldom succumbed to race-baiting to rouse readers against the Chinese. Nor did they condone anti-Chinese activities. Part of this may have been due to a basic antipathy to anarchy and vigilantism, but sympathy for the Chinese was expressed explicitly and deliberately. The Chinese had an inherent right to exist, and even to emigrate. Daryl Jones, in his study of the dime-novel western, notes that a key element of the Western hero--a white, self-reliant, hardy frontiersman--is Indian hating and Indian fighting. The pioneer hero blazed trails and killed "savages" indiscriminately as he gradually opened up the West for "civilization." Such ruthless racial and cultural hatred never gained legitimacy when directed against the Chinese in the dime novel. The dime novel hero tended to stand up for the Chinese if not as a brother at least as a member of a common humanity fully deserving in his rights. It is the malefactor--the crude ruffian and the ignorant, lawless crowd--who preached violence against the Chinese that

authors generally condemned. "A heathen Chineese accused was a heathen Chineese guilty" may have been true in parts of the West but not in the land of the dime novel. In fact, a reader could be fairly certain that a Chinese accused was a victim of rash or hasty judgment and would ultimately be found innocent. In Warne's Little Jingo; or, The Queer Pard (1884), for example, a mob accuses Sam Ling, a cook, of poisoning his former employer. They make him eat the food he had prepared. "While the Chinaman's head was held back, and his head was kept open by the insertion of a stick between his teeth, the food was forced down his gullet with a ramrod!" The crowd even threatens to burn him, when suddenly the real culprit appears. The crowd then acknowledged Sam's innocence: "reparation was promised him, and he was given into the hands of the doctor."⁷²

False accusation is also a central theme in My Partner, an extremely successful drama written by the popular playwright Bartley Campbell in 1879. Wing Lee, a stereotypical Chinese domestic, is accused of theft and murder. A mob assembles and, rushing at Wing, shouts, "Hang him! Hang him!" Joe, the hero, leaps before the crowd. "Stop!" he tells them, "No you don't!" and proceeds to make a spirited defense of Wing Lee: "He's a poor heathen but the God who made him made us! He's a stranger in a strange land, and he don't neither understand our language or our laws. But I'll stake my life on his innocence, and before

you take his life--ye'll have to give him a fair square trial." Needless to say, Wing Lee is found innocent.⁷³

In numerous dime novels and plays the Chinese are the targets of false accusations. Fast-paced, melodramatic action, after all, demanded hot-headed, fiery characters. But such conventions reflected attitudes toward Westerners as much as toward the Chinese. Authors frequently commented on the atmosphere of bigotry that pervaded the Pacific coast. "Chinamen," Jesse C. Cowdrick wrote in Fighting Harry, the Chief of Chained Lightning; or, The Heathen Chinees's Mission (1889), "have a hard time of it in some towns of the 'wild and woolly' West, where their room is looked upon as better than their company...." Edward L. Wheeler was even blunter: "from Washington Territory down to the Gulf," he wrote, "... where is the miner, old or young ... who bears any particular affection for the average Celestial?" Acknowledgement did not mean approval. "It is natural, in California," wrote W.J. Hamilton in The Gulch Miners (1867), "to oppress John Chinaman, to the shame of the miners be it spoken, though as a class they [the Chinese] are the most inoffensive and laborious men in the Golden State." Seventeen years later, novelist William R. Eyster noted that "the prejudice against his race" might prevent We Wailo from being hired by Miss Millie. But like the Farleys in *Broad Ax*, Miss Millie overcomes the local racist hysteria and gives him a job. The underlying message

in dime-novel literature is tolerance and independence. Hamilton denounced "the national prejudice" against the Chinese. "People in the States," he wrote in 1867, "are apt to form a wrong opinion of these men. Though trampled on and abused by the whites, they are, for the most part, quiet and inoffensive to the last degree."⁷⁴

In examining the image of the Chinese in popular culture, historians have failed to look beyond the often demeaning, often offensive stock descriptions and stereotypes. To fully understand the Chinese image, however, it is essential to analyze the actual roles that Chinese characters played in the storylines and dramas. Sometimes they are background characters, almost like scenery, used to fill a tableau or set a mood. But more often they are legitimate individuals as developed (or undeveloped) as the white protagonists, fully participating in the breathless, thrill-a-minute action. They fight, they die, they run, they act. Like white male characters, they defend women, track down outlaws, and uphold the law. They make friends, work hard, and rely on their wits and muscles to survive. Like white characters, they might not be respectable: they might be gamblers, conmen, or thieves. But the Chinese are seldom evil. They are peculiar, perhaps, but not pariahs. They neither threaten nor undermine American society. In fact, they are a part of it.

In presenting the Chinese, the purveyors of popular culture drew on popular stereotypes. Within these parameters they invented characters to both interest and amuse their readers. They never asked that the Chinese be loved but they did ultimately call for some measure of acceptance. They consistently presented the Chinese as victims of problems, not the cause. Nor were the Chinese themselves the problem. Rather, the Chinese were fellow actors in an epic drama of civilization and violence playing itself out on the vast scale of the West. More often than not the Chinese were good.

NOTES

1. Edward L. Wheeler, Solid Sam, the Boy Road-Agent; or, The Branded Brows, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (VI:141), April 6, 1880, p. 9. The term dime novel is a generic one encompassing cheap fiction that sold for five, ten, fifteen, or twenty cents, as well as novels serialized in magazines that sold for a few pennies or more.
2. Jesse C. Cowdrick, Silver-Mask, The Man of Mystery; or, The Cross of the Golden Keys. A Romance of New Mexico, Beadle's Half Dime Library (XIV:360), June 17, 1884, p. 4.
3. J.W.J. Todd, Arthur Eustace; or, A Mother's Love. A Temperance Drama in Five Acts (Clyde, Ohio: Ames, 1891), pp. 2, 30. It might be added that in the script directions, Hans, the German immigrant is referred to by name while Sing Lee is simply called "Chinaman."
4. Frank Dumont, "The Chinees Laundryman," (Philadelphia: Fischer, 1880), reprinted in Lester S. Levy, Flashes of Merriment: A Century of Humorous Songs in America, 1805-1905 (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, 1971), pp. 157-58.
5. Col. Prentiss Ingraham, War Path Will, The Traitor Guide; or, The Boy Phantom, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (XV:387), Dec. 23, 1884.
6. "John Chinaman," in Girls, Don't Fool With Cupid, Songster. Contains New and Popular Songs Sung By Billy Emerson, Master Birney, Charles Vivian, Frank Howard, Frank Wilder, Lydia Thompson, Mddle. Christine Nilsson, Miss Annie Louise Cary, and Other Celebrities (New York: Beadle and Adams, 1871), p. 39.
7. The sources for this chapter and chapter 3 are almost all from the Northeast and Midwest from the 1860s to 1890. A few plays from the 1890s have also been considered.
8. Merle Curti, "Dime Novels and the American Tradition," Yale Review (XXVI:4), June 1937, p. 761; Albert Johannsen, The House of Beadle and Adams and Its Dime and Nickel Novels: The Story of a Vanished Literature, 3 vols., I (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma, 1950), p. 9. Bishop, Whittaker, Noel, and Smith cited in Michael Denning, Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America (London and New York: Verso, 1987), pp. 28-29.

9. Denning, Mechanic Accents, pp. 45-46. For a full discussion, see especially chapter 3.

10. William Purviance Fenn, Ah Sin and His Brethren in American Literature (Peking, 1933).

11. Robert McClellan, The Heathen Chinees: A Study of American Attitudes Toward China, 1890-1905 (Ohio State University, 1971). See especially chapters 1, 2, and 4. The quotes are from pp. 47, 59-60, 111, 122, 127. The Chinese, McClellan writes, "simply did not offer sufficient potential for heroism." He notes no Chinese characters possessing physical strength, courage, or daring.

12. Limin Chu, The Images of China and the Chinese in the "Overland Monthly," 1868-1875, 1883-1935 (San Francisco: R and E Research Associates, 1974). This book is a reprint of Limin Chu's 1965 dissertation. The quotes are from pp. 6, 233.

13. William Wu, The Yellow Peril: Chinese Americans in American Fiction (Hamden, Ct.: Archon Books, 1982), pp. 1, 29. On rat-eating, see pp. 116, 117.

14. Edward L. Wheeler, Corduroy Charlie, the Boy Bravo; or, Deadwood Dick's Last Act, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (III:77), 1879, p. 4; Joseph E. Badger, Jr., "Little Volcano, The Boy Miner; or, The Pirates of the Placers. A Romance Among the Lawless," Saturday Journal, (New York: Beadle and Adams), Sept. 2, 1876, p. 3, and Sept. 9, 1876, p. 3; Albert W. Aiken, Rocky Mountain Rob, the California Outlaw; or, The Vigilantes of Humbug Bar (New York: Beadle and Adams, 1875; first published in Saturday Journal, Feb.-May 1873), pp. 70, 126; "A Chinese Practical Joke," Harper's New Monthly Magazine (XLVIII:CCLXXXV) Feb. 1874, p. 432; Anthony P. Morris, The Roughts of Richmond; or, The Mystery of the Golden Beetle, Beadle's New York Dime Library (XXIV:306), Sept. 3, 1884, p. 15; L.L. Ware, Gyp, the Heiress; or, The Dead Witness. A Drama in Four Acts (Clyde, Ohio: Ames, 1892), pp. 11, 12; Sep. Winner, "The Coolie Chinees. Humorous Song," Amateur. A Repository of Music, Literature, and Art (1:8; Philadelphia: Lee & Walker, April 1871), pp. 150-52; Jesse C. Cowdrick, Fighting Harry, The Chief of Chained Cyclone; or, The Heathen Chinees's Mission, Beadle's Half Dime Library (XXIV:615), May 7, 1889, pp. 6, 8; Philip S. Warne, Little Ah Sin; or, The Curse of Blood. A Tale of Ranch Life, Beadle's Half Dime Library (XVII:431), Oct. 27, 1885, p. 4; George L. Aiken, "Fergus Fearnought; or, Our New York Boys," Saturday Journal (New York: Beadle and Adams), March 11, 1876; Albert W. Aiken, Chin Chin, the Chinese Detective; or, The Dark Work of the Black Hand, Beadle's New York Dime

Library (XXXVII:475), Nov. 30, 1887 (first published in Beadle's Weekly, May 9-Aug. 1, 1885), pp. 2, 7; W.R. Eyster, Pinnacle Pete; or, The Fool From Way Back, Beadle's New York Dime Library (XXXVII:478), Dec. 21, 1887, p. 29; "Life in China. The Personal Observations of Messrs. Locke and Karns in China, Boring for Oil, in the Employ of the U.S. Government," Star Journal (X:499), Oct. 4, 1879, p. 7; Philip S. Warne, Little Jingo; or, The Queer Pard, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (XV:373), Sept. 16, 1884, p. 12; Jesse C. Cowdrick, Broadway Billy Abroad; or, The Bootblack Bravo in San Francisco, Beadle's Half Dime Library (XXVI:669), May 20, 1890.

15. Edward L. Wheeler, Captain Crack-Shot, The Girl Brigand; or, Gipsy Jack from Jimtown, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (IX:217), Sept. 20, 1881, p. 2; Peter Pad, "Shorty in Search of His Dad," The Five Cent Wide Awake Library (I:434; New York: Frank Tousey), June 13, 1881, p. 37; Frank Dumont, Wide-A-Wake, the Robber King; or, The Idiot of the Black Hills. A Dramatic Romance of Wild Life on the Border, Beadle's New York Dime Library (V:60), 1879, p. 2; Puck, July 6, 1881, p. 301; Mrs. Azalea Hunt, The Lost Dog. A Comic Dialogue (Lebanon, Ohio: March Brothers, n.d. [1890s?]), p. 3.

16. Bernard Francis Moore, Poverty Flats. A Play of Western Life in Three Acts (Boston: Walter H. Baker, 1899), p. 3; Edward L. Wheeler, Cinnamon Chip, the Girl Sport; or, The Golden Idol of Mt. Rosa, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (V:121), Nov. 18, 1879, p. 2; Wheeler, Captain Crack-Shot, The Girl Brigand (1881), p. 2; Wheeler, Deadwood Dick's Dream; or, The Rivals of the Road, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (VIII:195), April 19, 1881, p. 2; George M. Baker, Nevada; or, The Lost Mine. A Drama in Three Acts (Boston: Walter H. Baker, 1882), p. 3; George M. Baker, New Brooms Sweep Clean. A Farce (Boston: Walter H. Baker, 1898; first published 1870), p. 263; Mary B. Horne, The Last of the Peak Sisters; or, The Great Moral Dime Show. An Entertainment in One Scene (Boston: Walter H. Baker, 1892), p. 4; Nathan Appleton, Centennial Movement. 1876. A Comedy in Five Acts (Boston: Lockwood, Brooks, 1877), p. 27; Frank Dumont, Conrad; or, The Hand of a Friend (Chicago: Dramatic Publishing, 1897 [1882?]; Badger, "Little Volcano, The Boy Miner" (1876), pp. 2-3.

17. Pad, "Shorty in Search of His Dad" (1881), p. 37; L.L. Ware, Gyp, the Heiress; or, The Dead Witness. A Drama in Four Acts (Clyde, Ohio: Ames, 1892), p. 12; Eyster, Pinnacle Pete (1887), p. 20; Aiken, Rocky Mountain Rob, the California Outlaw (1873), p. 70; W.J. Hamilton (Charles D. Clark), The Gulch Miners; or, The Queen of the Secret

Valley. A Romance of the Gold Region (New York: Beadle, 1867), p. 12.

18. Frank Dumont, Blue Blazes; or, The Break O' Day Boys of Rocky Bar, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (VI:140), March 30, 1880, p. 8; William R. Eyster, A Sport in Spectacles; or, The Bad Time at Bunco, Beadle's New York Dime Library (LXXX:1093), Feb. 1884, p. 5; Peter Pad, "The Shortys Married and Settled Down. A Sequel to All the Shorty Stories," The Five Cent Wide Awake Library (I:497; New York: Frank Tousey, July 3, 1882), pp. 25-26; Aiken, Rocky Mountain Rob, the California Outlaw (1873), p. 72; Bret Harte, Two Men of Sandy Bar. A Drama (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1882; first published 1876), p. 81; Pad, Short in Search of His Dad (1881), p. 37; William R. Eyster, Seven Shot Steve, The Sharp With a Smile; or, Dan Garland's Great Clean-Up, Beadle's New York Dime Library (XLV:578), Nov. 20, 1889, pp. 27-28. For examples of how the Chinese would seek rewards or quickly grab money, see Aiken, Chin Chin the Chinese Detective (1885); Edward L. Wheeler, Apollo Bill, The Trail Tornado; or, Rowdy Kate from Right Bower, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (X:236), Jan. 31, 1882; Dumont, Conrad; or, The Hand of a Friend.

19. Pad, "The Shortys' Trip Around the World" (1881), p. 57; Dumont, Blue Blazes (1880), pp. 8, 9; Charles Townsend, The Golden Gulch. An Original Drama in Three Acts (New York: Dick and Fitzgerald, 1893), p. 34.

20. Major Dangerfield Burr, Velvet Face, the Border Bravo; or, Muriel, the Danite's Bride. The Romance of a Border Mystery, Beadle's New York Dime Library (XII:156), Oct. 19, 1881, p. 10; Captain Howard Holmes, The Lost Bonanza; or, The Boot of Silent Hound. A Tale of Three Millions, Beadle's New York Dime Library (XXXI:392), April 28, 1886, p. 23; Wheeler, Corduroy Charlie, the Boy Bravo (1879), p. 5; Captain Mark Wilton, Silver-Plated Sol, The Montana Rover; or, Giant Dave's Fight With Himself, Beadle's New York Dime Library (XXIV:305), Aug. 27, 1884, p. 28; Cowdrick, Fighting Harry, the Chief of Chained Cyclone (1889), p. 6.

21. Bret Harte, "Plain Language from Truthful James," Overland Monthly 5, Sept. 1870, pp. 287-88. The poem was reprinted widely under the title, "The Heathen Chinees." See Harte, "The Heathen Chinees," illustrations by S. Eytinge, Jr. (Boston: James R. Osgood, 1871). It also appeared in musical form. See Harte, "The Heathen Chinees," music by Francis Boott (Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1870); Harte, "The Heathen Chinees," music by Henry Tucker (Robert De Witt, 1871) in Comical, Topical and Motto Songs (New York: Richard A. Saalfeld, n.d. [1887?]), pp. 86-87. On the

poem's popularity, see Fenn, Ah Sin and His Brethren in American Literature. For a searing analysis of the poem, see Ronald Takaki, Iron Cages: Race and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America (New York: Knopf, 1979), pp. 222-24.

22. Augustin Daly, Horizon, an Original Drama of Contemporaneous Society and of American Frontier Perils, in Five Acts and Seven Tableaux (New York: Daly, 1885), p. 34; Moore, Poverty Flats (1899), p. 11; Townsend, The Golden Gulch (1893), p. 8; J.E. Cowley and Wilson T. Bennette, Crawford's Claim; or, Nugget Nell, The Pet of Poker Flat. A Drama in Prologue and Three Acts (New York: Dick and Fitzgerald, 1890), p. 23; "The Boy Scouts of the Sierras," The Five Cent Wide Awake Library (I:404; New York: Frank Tousey), April 4, 1881; Aiken, Rocky Mountain Rob, the California Outlaw (1873), pp. 125, 136; Edward L. Wheeler, Deadwood Dick in Leadville; or, A Strange Stroke for Liberty, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (IV:100), 1879, p. 5; Winner, "The Coolie Chinees" (1871), pp. 150-52; Albert W. Aiken, Red Richard Man From Red Dog; or, The Brand of the Crimson Cross. A Romance of California Mining Life, Beadle's New York Dime Library (XXVIII:354), Aug. 5, 1885 (first published in Beadle's Weekly, Apr. 21-June 30, 1883), p. 9. For a scene where the Chinese are big winners at cards, see also The Star Journal (X:505; New York: Beadle and Adams), Nov. 15, 1879, p. 8.

23. Edward L. Wheeler, Deadwood Dick's Three; or, The 'Bellerin Bull' of Bismarck, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (XXI:522), July 26, 1887, pp. 3, 9; Wheeler, Corduroy Charlie, the Boy Bravo (1879), pp. 5-6; Pad, "The Shortys' Trip Around the World" (1881), pp. 13, 22-23; Pad, "The Shortys Married and Settled Down" (1882), pp. 24-25. See also Holmes, The Lost Bonanza (1886), p. 23; Captain Mark Wilton, Bullet Head, the Colorado Bravo; or, The Prisoners of the Death Vault, Beadle's New York Dime Library (XX:258), Oct. 3, 1883.

24. Frederick Whittaker, The Flying Dutchman of 1880; or, Who Was Vanderdecken? A True Story Told by the Survivor of the American Clipper 'Spindrift', Beadle's New York Dime Library (XVIII:230), March 21, 1883, p. 10; Aiken, Rocky Mountain Rob, the California Outlaw (1873), p. 70; Eyster, Seven Shot Steve, The Sharp With a Smile (1889), p. 20; Captain Mark Wilton, Horseshoe Hank, The Man of Big Luck; or, The Gold Brick of Idaho, Beadle's New York Dime Library (XXIII:291), May 21, 1884, p. 13; Badger, "Little Volcano, The Boy Miner," Sept. 2, 1876, p. 3, and Sept. 23, 1876, pp. 2-3; Eyster, A Sport in Spectacles (1884), p. 8; Aiken, Red Richard Man From Red Dog (1885), p. 3; Joseph E. Badger, Major Magnet, the Man of Nerve; or, The Muck-a-Mucks

of Animas, Beadle's New York Dime Library (XLII:541), March 6, 1889, p. 16; Captain Mark Wilton, Barranca Bill, the Revolver Champion; or, The Witch of the Weeping Willows, Beadle's New York Dime Library (XIX:245), July 4, 1883, p. 5; Aiken, Chin Chin The Chinese Detective (1885), p. 3; Eyster, Pinnacle Pete (1887), p. 30.

25. Wheeler, Corduroy Charlie, the Boy Bravo (1879), pp. 4-5; Burr, Velvet Face, the Border Bravo (1881), p. 3; Edward Willett, The Roving Sport; or, The Pride of Chuckaluck Camp, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (XII:311), July 10, 1883, p. 11; Moore, Poverty Flats (1899), p. 26; Winner, "The Coolie Chinees" (1871), pp. 150-52; Colonel Prentiss Ingraham, Kent Kingdon, The Card King; or, The Owls of the Overland, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (XXII:565), May 22, 1888, p. 12; Badger, "Little Volcano, The Boy Miner," Sept. 9, 1876, p. 3; Ingraham, War Path Will, The Traitor Guide (1884), p. 11.

26. Dumont, Wide-A-Wake, The Robber King (1879), p. 12; Edward L. Wheeler, Deadwood Dick's Device; or, The Sign of the Double Cross, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (IV:104), July 23, 1879, p. 2; Albert W. Aiken, Blake, the Mountain Lion; or, The Fresh Against the Field, Beadle's New York Dime Library (XLII:537), Feb. 6, 1889, pp. 14, 15; Edward L. Wheeler, Denver Doll, the Detective Queen; or, Yankee Eisler's Big Surround, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (XI:277), Nov. 14, 1882, p. 2; Aiken, Rocky Mountain Rob, the California Outlaw (1873), pp. 86-87.

27. Aiken, Chin Chin the Chinese Detective (1885), pp. 2, 3, 7, 8, 13, 16, 17, 18; Wheeler, Corduroy Charlie, the Boy Bravo (1879), pp. 5, 7; Morris, The Roughts of Richmond (1884), p. 15; Badger, "Little Volcano, The Boy Miner," Sept. 2, 1876, p. 3; Cowdrick, Fighting Harry, The Chief of Chained Cyclone (1889), p. 8; Philip S. Warne, Tiger Dick vs. Iron Despard; or, Every Man Has His Match. An Account of the 'Leetle Diffikilty' at Fool's Luck, Beadle's New York Dime Library (XX:251), Aug. 15, 1881, p. 2; Philip S. Warne, Jack Sand the Boss of the Town; or, The Fool of Fiddler's Folly, Beadle's New York Dime Library (XXVI:338), April 15, 1885, p. 11; Cowdrick, Broadway Billy Abroad (1890), p. 8; Frank Dumont, Ebony Dan; or, The Rival Leagues of Silver Circle, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (VII:171), Nov. 2, 1880, p. 7; Philip S. Warne, Silver Riffle Sid; or, A 'Daisy' Bluff. A California Romance, Beadle's New York Dime Library (XXXII:404), July 21, 1886, p. 9; Badger, Major Magnet, the Man of Nerve (1889), p. 16; Eyster, A Sport in Spectacles (1884), p. 28; Wheeler, Denver Doll, the Detective Queen (1882), p. 5.

For plays with stage directions which have the Chinese character grinning, see, for example, T.W. Hanshew, The

Forty-Niners; or, The Pioneer's Daughter, A Picturesque Drama, in Five Acts (Clyde, Ohio: Ames, 1879), pp. 12-13, 22; Charles A. Taylor, "From Rags to Riches," in Garrett H. Leverton, ed., The Great Diamond Robbery and Other Recent Melodramas (Princeton: Princeton University, 1940), p. 109; Baker, Nevada (1882); T.S. Denison, Patsy O'Wang. An Irish Farce with a Chinese Mix-Up (Chicago: Dension, 1895), p. 13; James J. McCloskey, "Across the Continent; or, Scenes from New York Life and the Pacific Railroad," in Isaac Goldberg and Hubert Heffner, eds., Davy Crockett and Other Plays (Princeton: Princeton University, 1940), p. 106; "A Chinaman in Camp. For Three Males," The Dime Dialogues No. 38. An Original Collection of Dialogues, Colloquies, Minor Dramas and Dress Pieces. Humorous, Serious, Laughable and Sentimental. For All Grades of Schools, For Exhibitions and Entertainments, For the Lyceum and Club, For the Amateur Dramatic Stage (New York: Ivers, 1890), pp. 31, 34.

28. See, for example: Eyster, A Sport in Spectacles (1884), p. 7; Warne, Little Ah Sin (1885), p. 14; Cowley, Crawford's Claim (1890), p. 41.

29. Wheeler, Corduroy Charlie, the Boy Bravo (1879), pp. 4, 5; Wheeler, Denver Doll, the Detective Queen (1882), p. 5; Eyster, Pinnacle Pete (1887), p. 17; Eyster, A Sport in Spectacles (1884), p. 14; Pad, "The Shortys' Trip Around the World" (1881), p. 13.

30. Harte, "Plain Language from Truthful James," Overland Monthly, pp. 287-88; Aiken, Red Richard Man from Red Dog (1885), pp. 9, 18; Aiken, Chin Chin the Chinese Detective (1885), p. 3; Aiken, Blake the Mountain Lion (1889), p. 13; Burr, Velvet Face, the Border Bravo (1881), p. 8; Scott Marble, "The Stars and Stripes," (unpublished manuscript in New York Public Library Collection of the Performing Arts, n.d., c. 1900), p. 5; Peter Pad, "Tommy Bounce, Jr., A Chip of the Old Block," The Five Cent Wide Awake Library (I:484; New York: Frank Tousey), April 12, 1882; Pad, "Shorty in Search of His Dad" (1881), p. 37; Tom Teaser, "Mulligan's Boy," The Five Cent Wide Awake Library (I:68; New York: Frank Tousey), Feb. 10, 1879, p. 34; Pad, "The Shortys Married and Settled Down" (1882), pp. 26-28; Pad, "The Shortys' Trip Around the World" (1881), pp. 22-23.

31. Pad, "The Shortys' Trip Around the World" (1881), p. 30; Wheeler, Corduroy Charlie, the Boy Bravo (1879), p. 6; Pad, "Tommy Bounce, Jr., A Chip of the Old Block" (1882), pp. 26-27; Warne, Tiger Dick vs. Iron Despard (1883), p. 2; Warne, Jack Sand the Boss of the Town (1885), p. 11; "John Chinaman," in The 'First She Would and Then She Wouldn't' Songster (New York: De Witt, 1873), p. 43.

For other illustrations of Chinese alcohol consumption, see Dumont, Blue Blazes (1880), p. 9; Wheeler, Apollo Bill, The Trail Tornado (1882), p. 4; Wheeler, Denver Doll, the Detective Queen (1882), p. 11; Wilton, Barranca Bill, the Revolver Champion (1883), p. 6; Wilton, Bullet Head, the Colorado Bravo (1883), p. 2; Aiken, Chin Chin the Chinese Detective (1885), p. 3; Hanshew (1879), The Forty-Niners, pp. 12-13, 22; Bartley Campbell, "My Partner," in Barrett H. Clark, ed., Favorite American Plays of the Nineteenth Century (Princeton: Princeton University, 1943), pp. 273, 279; Baker, New Brooms Sweep Clean (1870), pp. 18, 23; Townsend, The Golden Gulch (1893), pp. 7, 8; McCloskey, "Across the Continent," p. 107; L.S. Powell and J.C. Frank, Conn; or, Love's Victory. A Drama of the Strikes (Washington: Ames, 1885), p. 14.

32. Daniel P. Rodgers, The Work Ethic in Industrial America, 1850-1920 (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1978); Paula Baker, Private Values and Public Life: Rural Men, Women, and Politics, 1870-1930 (forthcoming), p. 106.

33. Badger, "Little Volcano, The Boy Miner," Sept. 23, 1876, pp. 2-3; Eyster, Seven Shot Steve, The Sharp With a Smile (1889), p. 17; Wilton, Silver-Plated Sol, The Montana Rover (1884), p. 28; Badger, Major Magnet, the Man of Nerve (1889), p. 20; Hamilton, The Gulch Miners (1867), p. 66; Aiken, Chin Chin the Chinese Detective (1885), pp. 3, 4, 8; Cowdrick, Broadway Billy Abroad (1890), p. 3; Dumont, Wide-A-Wake, the Robber King (1879), p. 5; Warne, Tiger Dick vs. Iron Despard (1883), p. 2; Pad, "Shorty in Search of His Dad" (1881), p. 36; "The Boy Scouts of the Sierras" (1881); Cowdrick, Fighting Harry, The Chief of Chained Cyclone (1889), p. 9; Warne, Jack Sand the Boss of the Town (1885), p. 11; Mrs. Orrin James, Old Jupe: or, A Woman's Art (New York: Beadle, 1867), p. 82; Warne, Silver Riffle Sid (1886), pp. 9, 10; Punchinello, July 23, 1870, p. 264, August. 20, 1870, p. 334; McGee's Illustrated Weekly, April 3, 1880; New York Evening Telegram, July 8, 1870, p. 1; Wasp, Jan.-June 1893, Vol. 30, pp. 10-11, reprinted in Takaki, Iron Cages, p. 218.

For other references to the Chinese queue as a tail, see "The Boy Scouts of the Sierras" (1881); Badger, "Little Volcano, The Boy Miner," Aug. 19, 1876, p. 2.

34. Eyster, Pinnacle Pete (1887), pp. 22, 27; Warne, Tiger Dick vs. Iron Despard (1883), pp. 2, 23; Warne, Silver Riffle Sid (1886), pp. 9, 20, 28; Warne, Little Ah Sin (1885), p. 4, 12; Dumont, Ebony Dan (1880), p. 7; Cowdrick, Broadway Billy Abroad (1890), pp. 3, 14; Dumont, Conrad (1882), p. 28; Wheeler, Denver Doll, the Detective Queen (1882), p. 5; Aiken, Chin Chin the Chinese Detective (1885), p. 18; Dumont, Wide-A-Wake, the Robber King (1879),

p. 9; Wilton, Barranca Bill, the Revolver Champion (1883), p. 20.

35. Eyster, Seven Shot Steve, The Sharp With a Smile (1889), pp. 14, 15, 18; Eyster, Pinnacle Pete (1887), p. 17; Cowdrick, Broadway Billy Abroad (1890), p. 2; Eyster, A Sport in Spectacles (1884), pp. 14, 16, 20, 21, 25, 26; Aiken, Red Richard Man From Red Dog (1885), p. 18; Wheeler, Corduroy Charlie, the Boy Bravo (1879), p. 4; Morris, The Roughs of Richmond (1884), p. 15; Dumont, Blue Blazes (1880), p. 8; Townsend, The Golden Gulch (1893), p. 5; Baker, New Brooms Sweep Clean (1870), p. 270; Baker, Nevada (1882), p. 11.

36. Wilton, Silver-Plated Sol (1884), p. 28; Aiken, Chin Chin the Chinese Detective (1885), p. 4; Dumont, Blue Blazes (1880), p. 8; Dumont, Wide-A-Wake, the Robber King (1879), p. 2.

37. Winner, "The Coolie Chinee," (1871); "Heathen Chinee," in Wayne & Lovely's Acrobatic Songster (New York: Fisher, 1874), p. 34; New York Star, Sept. 24, 1870, p. 1; Puck, Aug. 21, 1879, p. 16, March 17, 1880; E.R. Donehoo, "John Chinaman," Charities Review VII (Jan. 1898), p. 914, quoted in McClellan, The Heathen Chinee, p. 92; advertisements reprinted in Hal Morgan, Symbols of America (New York: Viking, 1986), p. 56; Edward L. Wheeler, "A No. 1," The Dashing Toll-Taker; or, The Schoolmarm o' Sassafras, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (XII:299), April 17, 1883, p. 10; Wilton, Bullet Head, the Colorado Bravo (1883), p. 28; Warne, Little Ah Sin (1885), pp. 4, 8.

For examples of plays with Chinese characters eating rats, see Todd, Arthur Eustace (1891), pp. 2, 30; Baker, New Brooms Sweep Clean (1870), pp. 274, 279; Moore, Poverty Flats (1899), p. 13; Ware Gyp, the Heiress (1892), p. 17; and "A Chinaman in Camp" (1890), pp. 31, 33. For songs, see Winner (1871), "The Coolie Chinee," (1871); Dumont, "The Chinee Laundryman" (1880); and Sam Devere, "Heathen Chinee," in Sam Devere's Combination Songster (New York: Fisher, 1876), p. 25.

For other references to Chinese as rats, cats, and dogs, see Teaser, "Mulligan's Boy" (1879), p. 34; Aiken, Chin Chin the Chinese Detective (1885), pp. 4, 5, 7; Dumont, Wide-A-Wake, the Robber King (1879), p. 5; Wheeler, Corduroy Charlie, the Boy Bravo (1879), p. 14; Holmes, The Lost Bonanza (1886), p. 23.

Mark Twain was one of the few to question "John Chinaman['s] ... supposed habit of dining on roast rat. Probably," he wrote in 1870, "this legend is about as well founded as the once current delusion that the frog is a staple of French diet. We have heard a very plausible explanation of the story, namely, that Chinese rat-catchers

carry about dead rats on a stick as a sign of their profession, and have been mistaken by foreigners for hawkers offering the animals for sale." Twain concludes, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that revulsion is unAmerican: "after all, if he chooses to eat rat, why shouldn't he? Isn't this a free country?" (Mark Twain, Galaxy, Dec. 1870, p. 888.) Compare this quote to the earlier one of George Prindle in chapter 1.

38. Jean Baker, Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century (Ithaca: Cornell University, 1983), chapter 6.

39. For a general overview of xenophobia and the treatment of minority members in dime novels, see Michael K. Simmons, "Nationalism and the Dime Novel," Studies in the Humanities (IX:1) Dec. 1981, pp. 39-44.

40. Philip S. Warne, Little Ah Sin; or, The Curse of Blood. A Tale of Ranch Life, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (XVII:431), Oct. 27, 1885.

41. Ibid., pp. 1-2.

42. Ibid., p. 2.

43. Ibid., pp. 3-4.

44. Ibid., pp. 6-8.

45. Ibid., p. 8.

46. Ibid., pp. 8-9.

47. Ibid., pp. 9-12.

48. Ibid., pp. 13-14.

49. Ibid., pp. 13-14.

50. Ibid., p. 14.

51. Ibid., pp. 14-15.

52. Ibid., pp. 2, 4, 6, 7, 11, 14.

53. Ibid., pp. 6, 7.

54. Ibid., pp. 4, 6, 8.

55. Ibid., pp. 12, 13, 14.

56. Ibid., p. 3.

57. Col. Prentiss Ingraham, War Path Will, The Traitor Guide; or, The Boy Phantom, Beadle's Half Dime Library (XV:387), Dec. 23, 1884, pp. 10, 15.

58. Ibid., pp. 10-11.

59. Ibid., pp. 11, 15. One of the "odd Chores" China performs is stopping the trouble caused by "Mormon outlaws."

60. Ibid., p. 10.

61. Wheeler, Corduroy Charlie, the Boy Bravo (1879), p. 7; Wheeler, "A No. 1," The Dashing Toll-Taker (1883), pp. 9, 10; Eyster, Pinnacle Pete (1887), pp. 20, 27-30; Aiken, Red Richard Man from Red Dog (1885), pp. 3, 20; Wilton, Barranca Bill, the Revolver Champion (1883), pp. 5, 6, 21; Hamilton, The Gulch Miners (1867), p. 84; Wilton, Silver-Plated Sol, The Montana Rover (1884), pp. 27-28.

62. Wilton, Horseshoe Hank, The Man of Big Luck (1884), pp. 13, 16-17.

63. Aiken, Red Richard Man from Red Dog (1885), especially pp. 1, 3, 21; Wheeler, Cinnamon Chip, the Girl Sport (1879), pp. 2, 4, 11; Wilton, Barranca Bill, the Revolver Champion (1883), pp. 27, 30; Wilton, Bullet Head, the Colorado Bravo (1883), pp. 27, 31; Eyster, Pinnacle Pete (1887), p. 27.

64. Aiken, Rocky Mountain Rob, the California Outlaw (1873), pp. 136, 140, 147.

65. Ibid., pp. 142, 181-85.

66. Moore (1899), Poverty Flats, pp. 24-25, 34-35.

67. Wheeler, Solid Sam, the Boy Road-Agent (1880), p. 9; Cowdrick, Silver-Mask, The Man of Mystery (1884), p. 4; Col. Prentiss Ingraham, The Born Guide; or, The Sailor Boy Wanderer, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (XVIII:462), June 1, 1886, pp. 9-10.

68. Wheeler, Apollo Bill, The Trail Tornado (1882), pp. 3-4; Edward L. Wheeler, Bonanza Bill, Miner; or, Madam Mystery, the Female Forger. A Tale of the City of San Francisco, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (V:125), Dec. 16, 1879, p. 2; Warne, Silver Riffle Sid (1886), pp. 9-10, 12, 28.

A similar sentiment is voiced in Velvet Face: "'That heathen,'" a character says of a Chinese who becomes sad

when a woman gets hurt, "'has more heart than most Christians....'" (Burr, Velvet Face, the Border Bravo (1881), p. 8.)

69. Eyster, Seven Shot Steve, The Sharp With a Smile (1889), pp. 12, 14, 15, 17.

70. Ibid., pp. 15, 17, 26-28.

71. Ibid., p. 15.

72. Daryl Jones, The Dime Novel Western (Bowling Green, Ohio: Bowling Green University, 1978), chapter 3; Warne, Little Ah Sin (1885), p. 13; Philip S. Warne, Little Jingo; or, The Queer Pard, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (XV:373), Sept. 12, 1884, pp. 14-15.

73. Campbell, "My Partner," p. 285. Theater critic and historian Barrett H. Clark notes that "My Partner" toured the United States and Europe in the 1880s, was translated into German and performed in Berlin, and remained "a stock favorite" into the twentieth century. It was made into a movie in 1909. (Clark, Favorite American Plays of the Nineteenth Century, p. xx.)

74. Cowdrick, Fighting Harry, The Chief of Chained Cyclone (1889), p. 9; Wheeler, Solid Sam, the Boy Road-Agent (1880), p. 9; Hamilton, The Gulch Miners (1867), p. 10, 41; Eyster, A Sport in Spectacles (1884), p. 6.

CHAPTER 3

"HOW CHARMING! SO CHILDLIKE!":

THE IMAGE OF THE CHINESE IN POPULAR CULTURE
DURING THE ERA OF EXCLUSION, PART TWO,
AND THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CLASS

"... he's not all haythen, the durthy Chinnay, there's a bit av a man about him afther all."

--Molly to Win Lung, in T.W.
Hanshew, The Forty-Niners; or, The
Pioneer's Daughter (Clyde, Ohio:
Ames, 1879)

What The Chinese Were Not

As important as analyzing how the Chinese were portrayed in popular culture is analyzing how they weren't portrayed. Most of the familiar litany of Chinese evils mouthed by politicians and editors was entirely absent from the dime novel and other sources. Filthiness, for example, is seldom mentioned. Chinese characters have varied qualities, but dirtiness is not among them. Despite the endless fistfights, horse chases, and madcap getaways--as well as the limited sanitary facilities in the old West--dime novelists did not single out the Chinese (or anyone else) for being unclean or unwashed. Perhaps their positions as launderers, cooks, and domestics suggested some modicum of cleanliness, yet even the notorious Chinatown, scene for a handful of dime novels, was not depicted as

exceptionally dirty. In addition, the Chinese carry no diseases. The major epidemics that sinophobes and politicians during the era of exclusion came to associate with the Chinese--leprosy, venereal disease, and other pestilences--scarcely ever break out in the world of popular culture. The Chinese are neither infected with disease nor do they infect others. The most derogatory accusations sinophobes hurled against the Chinese--infanticide, polygamy, and prostitution--also go unmentioned. Finally, unlike blacks and Indians, the Chinese are seldom portrayed as unintelligent. Although buffoons on stage, dime novelists took pains to emphasize their cleverness, their shrewdness, and their sharp wits. These distinctions suggest a marked dichotomy between the Chinese of sinophobic politicians and editorialists, and the Chinese of purveyors of popular culture. The difference between the penny press and the dime novel was more than just a few cents. Politicians eager to get votes and publishers eager to get readers may have sought a common constituency but they appealed to different sensibilities. Dispensers of popular culture seldom stooped as low as ballot-hungry politicians in presenting their wares. The stock Chinese character of everyday fiction scarcely resembled the life-threatening Chinese immigrant of everyday politics.

A more subtle but equally significant discrepancy exists between popular culture and everyday life: although

dime novels appealed to a working-class audience and thrived on violence and conflict, they did not present the Chinese in industrial situations. The dime novel Chinese do not make shoes, roll cigars, or produce textiles. They neither break strikes nor threaten unions. They never even come near a factory. In fact, the only group the Chinese ever threaten in dime novels are miners.

As noted earlier, miners in popular culture evince a strong hatred for the Chinese. "'It may be an unwelcome surprise to you,'" Sunflower Sam tells a group of striking Arizona miners in Edward L. Wheeler's Sunflower Sam of Shasta; or, Deadwood Dick Jr.'s Full Hand (1886), "'but you are likely to be thrown out of work, unless you want to work for rat-eaters' wages.... There's two hundred of the pig-tail cusses on the edge of camp now, and the entrances to both mines are surrounded!'" The crowd cheers him on. "'Rah fer the Sunflower from Shasta,'" one miner yells. "'He's ther boy as will lead us ag'in' the heathen Chinees! We'll wipe ther flat-faced niggers from ther face o' ther earth!'" This vicious anti-Chinese rhetoric is unequalled in the realm of the dime novel, but even here the author took pains to single out the real enemies of the workers: the mineowners and Chinese importers. Boss Harkley, for example, is the "'agent for the Frisco firm that's introducin' cheap help into the different mining sections.'" The author painted him as "coarse, brutal and bloated."

This "surly Chinese trader," the author added, was "as ruffianly a looking chap as one would care to meet." In one scene, Harkley approaches the two mineowners, Max Mora and Augustine Andre:

"Boss [Harkley] can furnish a small army of Chinamen at very short notice [Max Mora told his partner] and generally has a force in reserve, so as to fill orders in quick time."

"Sort of a slave trade, as it were?" suggests Andre.

"Oh! yes. But that's no one's business but our own," Max replied. "If we can double our income by employing rat-eaters, it's to our interest to do so."

The miners no less than the author recognize the true perpetrators of evil. Although they held the Chinese "in the utmost contempt ... threats were freely made [by the miners] against the lives of ... Harkley and Mora, while Augustine Andre came in for his share of the abuse." The author referred to Andre as a "wretch," a "villain," and "a demon incarnate." The novel finally climaxes in a deadly confrontation between capital, labor, and the Chinese. The miners emerge victorious while the Chinese are attacked and either killed or driven from the town. More importantly, the miners kill Harkley and Mora outright, and, after a short trial, execute Andre who is revealed as a murderer.¹

Sunflower Sam of Shasta is the most extreme example of anti-Chinese sentiment and violence in any dime novel in the era of exclusion. As Sunflower Sam says, "'I have no more love for the race than you have, and believe that our American people have a right to object to being thrown out

of work by a class of people who will work literally for nothing, live on nothing, and grow rich in the bargain.'" This novel represents the most striking exception to the

general portrayal of Chinese in the dime novel, and yet, as hated and reviled as they are by the miners, the Chinese are not made the cause of the problem. The evil capitalists and cut-throat labor contractors are labor's real enemies.

Their death, more than the Chinese departure, symbolized the triumph of right over wrong at the novel's conclusion.²

Angry miners appear frequently in dime novels to denounce and to castigate the Chinese. It is curious, however, that dime novelists of the 1870s and 1880s--a period which witnessed countless anti-Chinese riots and massacres throughout the West--limited the source of anti-Chinese violence to disgruntled miners. No other group (except for the vague "San Francisco hoodlums") or occupation was mentioned or singled out. Even the handful of dime novels dealing directly with working-class themes, such as strikes, unemployment, and the Knights of Labor, scarcely ever mentioned the Chinese. Many contemporary labor events, such as the Molly Maguire trials, the national railroad strike of 1877, and the Haymarket bombing, received considerable treatment in popular fiction.³ The Chinese and the Chinese immigration restriction acts did not. Why? Was Chinese exclusion too hot an issue--or was it hardly an issue at all? While dime novelists did not shy away from

controversial working-class issues they practically ignored the political content of Chinese exclusion. Either they wanted to avoid insulting their working-class audience (by connecting them with anti-Chinese activism) or they simply found the issue irrelevant and of minor interest to their readers. Popular culture, ever seeking a successful formula and common denominator to attract consumers, made the Chinese humorous but not hated characters. Novelists, playwrights, and actors seldom exploited Chinese exclusion to boost sales.

During the era of exclusion three strongly anti-Chinese novels appeared: Atwell Whitney's Almond-Eyed: the Great Agitator; a Story of the Day (1878); Pierton W. Dooner's Last Days of the Republic (1880); and Robert Woltor's A Short and Truthful History of the Taking of Oregon and California by the Chinese in the Year A.D. 1899 (1882).⁴ These hysterically xenophobic works preached exclusion as the only means to insure the survival of the United States. Each novel stressed the racially inborn evil of the Chinese and the inevitability of a nationwide race war if such immigration continued. "The enduring element in this type of fiction," writes William Wu in his study of the Chinese in American fiction, "is the development ... of the Chinese as masses of mindless automata.... Instead of characterizing the individual Chinese, these authors claim simply that the Chinese had no individual character. The

race wars they depict climax the inherent conflicts that Social Darwinists believe existed between old and new societies." It is significant that all three of these novels were published in San Francisco, not on the East Coast or in the Midwest. Perhaps more significant is that dime novels did not descend to such ferocious race-baiting. "In the context of the novels [of invasion]," Wu continues, "... the Chinese cannot be dealt with on a rational basis as humans, but can only be confronted and opposed as an irrational force." This "naturalist interpretation of issues regarding Chinese immigrants," he concludes, "continues to dominate fiction about them for the next several decades." Such was not the case in dime novels of this period. Authors employed various stereotypes but took pains to humanize and occasionally even glorify the Chinese. They were portrayed far more often as individuals than as "mindless automata." The vicious sinophobia of the San Francisco propaganda novels may have made its way across the country, but it was not expressed in the numerous artifacts of popular culture. Sinophobia may have sold in the voting booth but not on the newsstand.⁵

Yet another way the Chinese of fiction differed from that of newspapers, editorials, and politicians was in their sexuality. From the New York Times to the Brooklyn Eagle, from Lippincott's to Scribner's, articles in middle-class organs emphasized the debauched, licentious Chinese

immigrant lusting after young white women.⁶ Mothers were warned not to leave their girls unattended with Chinese servants nor let them go alone to a Chinese laundry. Politician after politician harped on Chinese prostitution and sodomy and perverted sexuality. Lurid tales of rape and seduction peppered their speeches and informed countless editorials. Yet the Chinese immigrants many Americans read about in pulp fiction possessed none of these qualities. They were, for the most part, solitary, innocuous, asexual beings. Even when smoking opium, which presumably enhanced their sensuality, the Chinese scarcely ever pursued white women or each other. Nor did they interfere with the common dime-novel romances between other characters. Normally they sat on the sexual sidelines.

One glaring exception to this image appears in Edward L. Wheeler's "A No. 1," The Dashing Toll-Taker; or, The Schoolmarm o' Sassafras (1883). Rats, a wealthy Chinese immigrant, and Ned Temple, a white man, bid against each other for a woman at a public auction. Rats bids the most money but gets cheated out of her by Ned. A seething Rats swears vengeance and later confronts Ned. "His face was flaming with rage," the author wrote, "and he was evidently in a condition of fury." Rats pulls out a revolver and declares: "'Rats killee 'Melican man, an' den hab 'Melican girl.'" The two men have a long, bloody fight. At the end, Rats finally stabs Ned to death. "'Melican girl b'longee

to Chinaman!' he cried, with a grin. 'Velly muchee hate to killee, but had to!'" At this moment of victory, however, an accomplice of Ned's guns him down. Thus on the one occasion that a Chinese immigrant pursued a white woman he is immediately and brutally shot to death. The bullet "pierced his brain," the author noted, "killing him instantly." Such interracial unions could not be countenanced, much less consummated, even in fiction.⁷

The prospect of the Chinese possessing physical or romantic urges bordered on the ridiculous. In Apollo Bill, The Trail Tornado, Chin-Chin has an eye for American women. He is not, the author noted, "the ordinary run of Chinaman," but rather he is "very richly dressed a la Americaine." Riding in a stagecoach, he says, "'Makee muchee love to Melican girl, allee samee like Melican man!'" The author referred to him mockingly as "the Celestial Romeo" and terminates his longings by having him thrown out of the coach when it hits a bump. Later when Chin-Chin and Rowdy Kate overhear spies, he notes that the information might yield a reward. "'If Melican girl gittee any money,'" he says, "'she dividee with Chineeman allee samee as if she was his wiffee.'" After this statement Chin-Chin disappears from the novel. The idea of a Chinese man appealing to a white woman was so preposterous, even Indians scoffed. "'Chinee ... gittee muchee nice Melican girl for wiffee,'" Sam Yung tells Bad Medicine in Wheeler's Corduroy Charlie, the Boy

Bravo; or, Deadwood Dick's Last Act (1879). "'Wagh!'" Bad Medicine replies, "'Pig-Tail heap big lie! No white maiden notice man with frog eyes.'" These two rare examples, mild and brief as they are, suggest the limited sexual appetite of the Chinese immigrant in the dime novel. Even rarer is the male American attraction for Chinese women. Kangaroo Kit, a "'laborin' chap'" in Edward L. Wheeler's Kangaroo Kit; or, The Mysterious Miner (1883), admits to once having "'Got mashed on a purty Chinese gal in Denver,'" but that nothing came of it. Such comments--despite frequent references to Chinese prostitution in the daily press--were exceedingly scarce in pulp literature. Dime novelists gave no attention to presenting the Chinese immigrant--male or female--as a sexual being.⁸

Curiously, playwrights demonstrated far more interest in the Chinese desire for American women. "Chinaman mashed on Melican woman's shape," Ling tells Abigail as he hands her a bouquet in Crawford's Claim (1890). "Washee washee cost you flive dlollar," he adds, "Mally me, washee cost you nothing." "Marry you, you wretch!" exclaims an outraged Abigail, "I'll scratch your eyes out." In James J. McCloskey's Across the Continent; or, Scenes from New York Life and the Pacific Railroad, Susannah responds similarly to a Chinese man's attempt to "makee mashee" on her. Such responses were not atypical on the American stage. When Win Lung expresses his love to Molly, a red-headed "Ilish gal"

in T.W. Hanshew's The Forty-Niners; or, The Pioneer's Daughter, A Picturesque American Drama (1879), "She grabs him by the neck and pantaloons, runs him up stage and flings him out of [the] bay window." Love could cross neither racial nor religious boundaries. In Poverty Flats, both Win Lung and Dan Duffy profess their love for Biddy Houlahan. They play a game of poker to determine who will get her. Win, of course, cheats, and Dan calls the whole thing off. Win persists in his love and Dan threatens "to break that dom head of yers. Why, the idea! Shure it makes me shtutter whin I think av it.... Why, me bye, ye are dreamin'.... Whin Biddy marries," he concludes, "she is goin' to marry a Christian an' not a hathen. My dear bye, I'm the rale thing...." Sure enough, Dan ends up marrying Biddy, and Win is his best man.⁹

To be Chinese and genuinely in love on the American stage is simply impossible. To have sexual desire is downright absurd. "Me makee mashee," Wing Lee tells Posie in My Partner. "Chinaman no likee Chinawoman. He like Melican woman--me likee you.... me lovee you! Me mally you! Me keepee housee, all same Melican man." Posie, startled, screams and jumps away. "Well," she says, "I always knew that Chinaman was a fool." Far more often than in the dime novel, the American theater presented the Chinese immigrant as a fool, and never more so than when he claimed to be in love. The rare instance in which a Chinese

ruminates on love is more pathetic than moving. "Chinaman lik-ee git mallied too," Ling Foo laments in L.S. Powell and J.C. Frank's Conn; or, Love's Victory. A Drama of the Strikes (1885), "wif-ee wvell-ee nic-ee, loo blet [you bet]. If-ee Chinaman git mallied, he no eat-ee rat-ee and cat-ee no more; he start-ee up wash-ee--cheap wash-ee.... But Melican lad-ee no lik-ee Chinaman; think-ee him too much dlam fool-ee. Chinaman no glood--no glood." Americans could not accept an interracial couple, even one between Chinese and black. The humorous climax to Henry L. Williams' Wax Works at Play (1894) hinges on the audience laughing at the spectacle of a Chinese man and black woman being in love with each other due to a misdirected arrow shot by Cupid.¹⁰

Whether farce or drama, Chinese passion is laughable. Playwrights were obsessed with ridiculing their romantic feelings and physical urges. They turned the "danger" of unleashed Chinese sexuality into a harmless trifle, perhaps setting at ease a worried audience. The reverse situation, a white woman being attracted to a Chinese man, was put even more in the realm of fantasy. Such ludicrousness is celebrated in a popular nonsense song from 1880 about the tragic fate of a child spinster falling in love with a Chinese immigrant:

There was an old maid, she was eleven years old,
She was worth seven dollars and ten cents in gold;
She started a laundry, made money at her ease,
Till business was so brisk she hired a Chinese.

One Lung was his name, the old maid thought he was a
dear,
She'd kiss him in the neck and bite his ear;
She was mashed on his shape when the moon rained over
the sun,
A minister came in and made them one.

They washed and ironed each day without any fault,
Till he told the old maid she needed some salt;
The old maid got mad, and for him made a pass,
And then broke his nose with a Milwaukee beer-glass.

He had her arrested and then locked her in,
Took some opium and some three-cent gin:
He sat on the stove and awful hard he cried,
Next morning I read they both committed suicide.¹¹

The grasping, lecherous Chinese of the sinophobic press
and politician had no presence in popular culture.
Miscegenation and Chinese rape--innermost fears of white
America--aroused scant interest or treatment in dime novels,
and playwrights went to great lengths to channel such fears
away from reality. Characters expressed little fear of
Chinese sexuality or racial "mongrelization." Like Ah Sin,
whose affection for Edith Varney remained fraternal and
never sexual, the Chinese character was too innocent and
childlike to possess genuine romantic appeal. Even in the
world of melodrama and passion, the Chinese libido stayed
dormant. In the dime novel Chinese sexuality was
nonexistent. On stage Chinese lust was good for a joke and
little more. The licentious Oriental was too immature to
have true sexual needs. Like Ling Foo, he was nothing but a
harmless "dlam fool-ee." Chinese sexuality always came as a
surprise. As a stunned Molly says to the enamored Win Lung
in The Forty-Niners, "he's not all haythen, the durthy

Chinnay, there's a bit av a man about him afther all." With sexuality being equated with manliness and vigor, the various stereotypes of the near-androgynous Oriental reinforced the image of the Chinese immigrant as pallid, unattractive, and effeminate, not quite a man. Yet these images had a flip side just as important: It minimized the danger the Chinese represented to America's "racial purity." Neither aggressive nor violent, the Chinese would not physically undermine American society nor challenge American vitality or virility. The message sent by popular culture on Chinese sexuality was one of harmlessness and humor. White womanhood was safe, and so was white manhood.¹²

The Chinese v. Other Ethnic Groups,
and the Significance of Class

As a distinct racial minority in the United States, the Chinese were frequently compared to and paired with other groups. Such instances provide a good indicator of each group's relative position in the American social-racial hierarchy as revealed in the different sources of popular culture during the era of exclusion. Blacks were the group with whom the Chinese were most often linked, as both filled similar positions in American society. "'[H]ang me ef I don't bounce the pair o' ye,'" a white hotel manager yells at his two black dishwashers in Warne's Jack Sand the Boss of the Town; or, The Fool of Fiddler's Folly (1885), "'an'

hire a heathen Chineese fur my pot-wrastler!" In William F. ("Buffalo Bill") Cody's Gold Bullet Sport; or, The Knights of the Overland (1879), Judge Wolfe notes that "these Heathen Chineese, as we call them, are good cooks, and they make good servants as well." Also, they come cheap. In another story a black headservant fears that a Chinese immigrant will take away his job. Either race could perform the menial chores demanded by a white property-owning class. The Chinese, in fact, are sometimes called "yellow niggers." Seldom did the two races--black and yellow--get along, and they commonly echoed the same prejudices of white society. "'Shet up, yo' flat-faced rat-eater!'" shouts Walt in Wheeler's Denver Doll, the Detective Queen; or, Yankee Eisler's Big Surround (1882). "'Niggee! niggee!'" responds Chug, "'blackee allee samee like acee spadee!'"¹³

Despite this occasional jockeying for jobs and position, the Chinese tended to come off more positively than African-Americans in the dime novel. White characters befriend and defend the Chinese sooner than they do blacks, and although both races are clearly inferior to whites, the Chinese have a slight upper hand. One indication of this distinction is the frequency with which white characters disguise themselves as Chinese in dime novels but seldom (if ever) as blacks.¹⁴ Presumably the gulf between white and Chinese is narrower than between white and black. Although whites applied black-face and heavy makeup to impersonate

African-Americans in popular minstrel shows, white audiences knew full well the racial identity of the performers. That, in fact, was part of the amusement. In dime novels, however, the revelation of the white-as-Chinese masquerade often formed the denouement of the story. It was more convincing and more believable that a white character would impersonate a Chinese than he would impersonate a black.

This white-Chinese-black hierarchy did not exist on stage. Playwrights usually placed the Chinese beneath blacks (and many other groups) on the social scale. In Nathan Appleton's Centennial Movement. 1876 (1877), for example, foreign dignitaries attend the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition of 1876. The international cast includes aristocrats from Asia and Europe, as well as three American Indians and a black Congressman. All are portrayed as more cultured and advanced than Ching Ho, the washerman and sole Chinese. "[O]ff with you Chinaman!" says Prince Fusiami of Japan, "you know nothing." While everyone else is dazzled by American technology, Ho is afraid merely to ride an elevator. "Me no liky that," he says shuddering, "me rather go topside [upstairs] by the big steps." Playwrights depicted blacks as considering themselves superior to and more acculturated than the Chinese. In Wax Works, Raphael Pattern, a white sculptor, discusses hiring a launderer with his black domestic. "Matthew," says Pattern, "you are always running down that Mongolian, Wing Fat,

because you want the job for your [sweetheart]...."

"[Y]as," Matthew replies, "Lulu ... is de card fur washing."

PAT. But the Chinees comes cheaper.

MAT. Dat's so; de 'Merican ought to be dearer--see?

PAT. American? Your Lulu is an African.

MAT. Well, Africa am nearer dan China, I calc'lates....

By their longstanding presence in the United States and the greater proximity of their place of origin, blacks are considered more American than the Chinese. In George M. Baker's Nevada; or, The Lost Mine (1882), Jube assumes a patronizing attitude toward Win-Kye, who has whitewashed all the trees, locks, and other props on stage. "Look yere, you Celestial imp ... ob sin," Jube says, "... dis year ain't no time for mischief." Win-Kye, unfazed and with paintbrush in hand, then proceeds to recite "Little Jack Horner" in Chinese dialect. "Golly! hear dat Chineesers infusions ob poetry," bewails a lofty Jube. "Dat all comes ob his contract wid art.... Dis years de melencolic effect ob tryin' to turn a mongo into a Sambo. I's jes' tried to cibilize dat are heathen...."¹⁵

Turning "a mongo into a Sambo" is another convention used to parody the "lower races." In Peter Pad's The Shortys' Trip Around the World (1881), Shorty puts nitrate of silver into Ho Sham's shaving cup. This turns him black and scares the passengers on board. To get out the color, a doctor applies a remedy which turns Ho Sham green. Passengers joke about his being from Greenland and Shorty

suggests exhibiting him in Ireland. Still not done, Shorty tars and feathers Ho Sham so that he presumably resembles an American Indian. Such pranks, no matter how childish, suggest a certain indiscrimination by Anglo-Saxon Americans of groups deemed lower. Chinese, blacks, and Indians, although possessing distinct racial traits, still have more in common with each other than with the ruling race. Often interchangeable, they were first and foremost non-white and less than white. In Pad's Tommy Bounce, Jr., A Chip of the Old Block (1882), black Josh and Chinese Hop Ski are both portrayed as infantile, superstitious, and easily frightened. A group of white boys gets them drunk and sets them up against each other. Much to the boys' delight, Josh and Hop Ski have a knockdown fight. Ellen, the Irish cook, cheers them on. "'Go it, ye nagur!'" she cries, "'Go it, ye haythin!'" Later the two reconcile, and together they perform a minstrel show, "mostly in banjo and song by Josh, and dance and funny business by Hop." Josh, however, questions whether Hop Ski can really play a black man. "'Who eber seen a nigger wid a pig-tail?'" he asks. "'Pig-tail knockee wool allee dam,'" Hop replies in reference to Josh's hair "style." Whether fighting or entertaining, the lower races exist to amuse their white audience. Even the Irish, always caught in the middle, bare their prejudice and join in the "fun."¹⁶

The most salient image of white men instigating Chinese-black hostility appears in Major E.L. St. Vrain's Kingbolt Chris, The Young Hard-Shell Detective; or, The Solid Man from Slow-Coach (1884). Quong Ho, a "stout Chinaman," works as a porter for the evil Judge Mendick. He fights with Kingbolt Chris, the white hero. "'[Y]ou chin-chin rat-catcher,'" Chris yells as Ho holds him down, "'... you audacious heathen! ... Me, me, a free-born American citizen be took that way....'" John Jay, a black man, also works for Mendick. In the novel's conclusion Ho and Jay both attack Chris. He subdues them "docilely ... for both were thorough cowards when cornered." A victorious Chris demands satisfaction. He pits the Chinese and black men against one another: "their left arms were tied together at the wrists and each given a short, stout whip." "'I order ye ter flog each other,'" Chris commands, "'till I give ye leave ter stop, which I sha'nt do till ye smart ez much ez I do.'" The two combatants slowly begin lashing each other. "The crowd scented fun ahead," the author wrote, "and amid the cheers of the miners ... [it] became a regular race to see who could hit the hardest." Chris, the instigator, is clearly delighted as the whipping escalates. "'Hooray,'" he shouts, "'this hyar is ther war o' races.'" After numerous blows are exchanged, the two men are finally untied. (Kingbolt Chris, the reader is told in closing, goes on to become a successful businessman.) More significant than the

raw violence and sinophobic crowd of miners, however, is the fact that this scene is entirely gratuitous: It comes after the novel's denouement and has nothing to do with the plot. Both Ho and Jay are peripheral characters and play practically no role in the story. The black man, in fact, is not introduced until the last page of the novel. The author goes so far as to label the confrontation not a fight but "a festive occasion which put a lighter touch on what had gone before...." (Perhaps nowhere else has a race war been described as "a festive occasion.") This "festive," extraneous scene, however, was the one selected for the novel's cover. The "'war o' races'" quote is tacked on as a tag line meant to lure readers. [See figure 3.1] This illustration of the black and yellow races bound together and striking each other for the amusement of whites was clearly intended to sell copies. No starker image of racial manipulation ever appeared in popular culture. Chinese and blacks, like other minority groups, needed the stern discipline of white masters. The depiction of these two subject races in this instance and in others reflected deep-seated fears of numerous segments of American society. These fears were directed not so much against the Chinese but against all non-white, non-Anglo-Saxon, non-Protestant



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KINGBOLT CHRIS, The Young Hard-Shell Detective, Or The Solid Man From Slow Coach.
 BY MAJOR E. L. ST. VRAIN.
 AUTHOR OF "SANGHO, PRIMO, THE ROY RANGER," "RED TOP RIVER," "LEADVILLE NICK," ETC., ETC.



"BOO-HAY!" SHOUTED KINGBOLT CHRIS, "THIS HYAR IS THE WAR O' RACES!"

Figure 3.1. In this "war o' races," white men clap and cheer as a black man and Chinese man attack each other. Whether the artist intended any symbolism by having them tied to each other at the wrists can only be surmised.

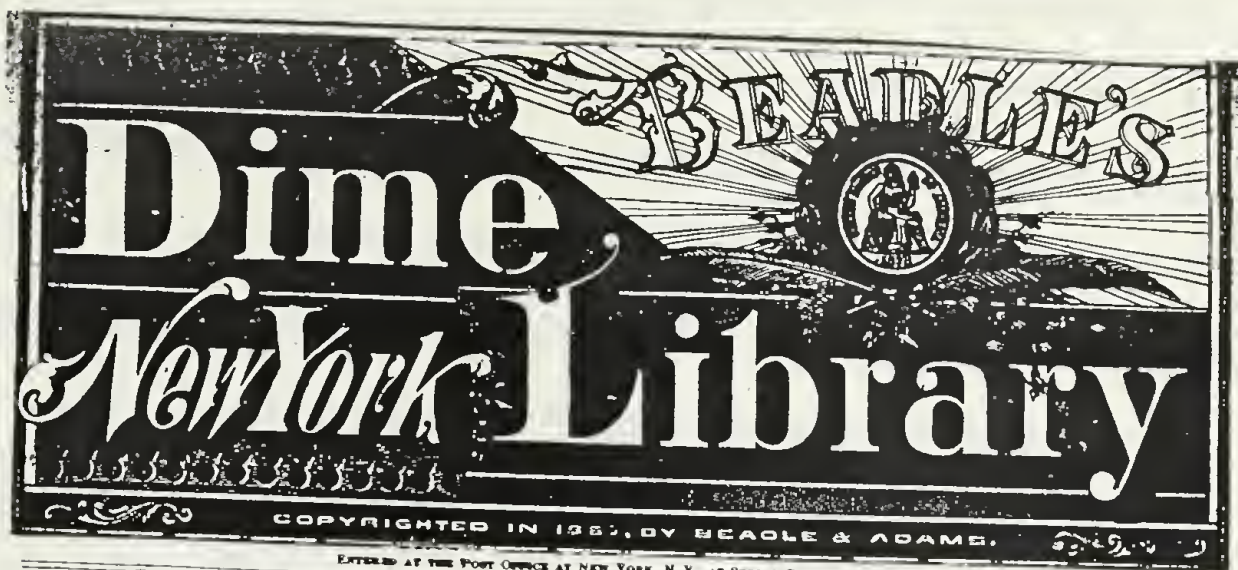
Source: E.L. St. Vrain, Kingbolt Chris, the Young Hard-Shell Detective; or, The Solid Man from Slow Coach (New York: Beadle's Dime Library, 15:371, September 2, 1884).

groups. Dime novels and popular theater certainly had fun with the Chinese, but seldom singled them out for special blame or direct action.¹⁷

Blacks are not the only group linked with the Chinese. Due to their sharp instincts and penchant for making money, the Chinese are also compared to Jews. "The most dangerous friend-foe I have in the world," one character claimed, is John Lee, "the Chinese Jew.... He has the power to foreclose it [the mine] any day...." Only the successful Chinese conjures up the Shylock stereotype. "A Chinese Jew is a luxury that not many a mining town can boast," wrote Edward L. Wheeler in Sierra Sam, the Frontier Ferret; or, A Sister's Devotion (1882), "--that is to say, a Chinaman with the characteristic shrewdness and business turn of a typical Jew...." Hong-Kong John, as he was called, was not all bad. A money-lender who ran the town's bank, he "was trusted by every one, as none had ever discovered any dishonest tricks about him." In "My Room-Mate in 1890," a brief account written in 1877 about life in the future, the two groups are also compared: "[S]ince the Jews went east, the Chinese came from the west, and we enjoy being cheated by them almost as much as in old times we relished it in Chatham Street." Dime-novelist Wheeler invoked the same stereotype in another story when he noted that "Clever Sam Yung, the Celestial ... was as sharp as a Bowery Jew in the art of cheating in business transactions." The transition from Jew

to Chinese as slick, money-hungry, fast-dealing peddler/usurer was compact and straightforward. The Chinese are even called "the Jews of the East." But there the connection ended. Besides the quick and easy comparisons of "racial" traits, Chinese and Jews are seldom linked as characters; they neither team up nor compete with each other. Chinese and Jews ultimately have little interaction in popular culture. The two groups were essentially different in the minds of white, Christian America and the comic or dramatic potential of such encounters remained unrealized. Unlike blacks, the position of Jews in the United States was as yet undefined, their impact minimal. The Jewish stereotype, at least in its connection to the Chinese, was far more important than the Jewish character or Jewish population, and the simple transference of the Shylock image sufficed in stories and on stage. To have set Chinese and Jew against each other would have been incongruous and meaningless.¹⁸

Direct though still very few encounters occur between the Chinese and American Indians. In Red Richard, Man from Red Dog (1885), Lee Sing and Mud Turtle are both pictured on the cover in similar, strong, self-confident poses. [See figure 3.2] They are fast friends who defend and protect each other. Such is not the case in Corduroy Charlie, the Boy Bravo (1879). Sam Yung--compared above to "a Bowery Jew"--is Bad Medicine's sidekick. Whites look down on both



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Figure 3.2. Chinese and American Indian both stand proudly on this dime novel cover.

Source: Albert W. Aiken, Red Richard Man from Red Dog; or The Brand of the Crimson Cross. A Romance of California Mining Life (New York: Beadle's Dime Library, 28:354, August 5, 1885).

of them, insulting Bad Medicine as a "'red nigger!'" He in turn looks down on Sam, and like dime novel blacks, imbibes the same prejudices of white society. "'Pig-tail dog,'" he says, "'He [is] like Injun squaw, only good to cook meat, an' mind lodge. He no go hunt elk, or cinnamon bear.'" Sam, he adds, fights like a "'leetle baby'" and is ultimately "'no much good.'" Like whites and blacks, Indians too could denigrate the Chinese for their lack of manly qualities. Their proficiency in performing "womanly" tasks such as cooking, housekeeping, and laundry set them apart from men of other races. At the same time, their presumed ability to make money also distinguished them from other races, especially American Indians. General George Crook, a noted Indian fighter in the U.S. Army, commented on this distinction. "The Indian in his nature is in one respect the opposite of the Chinaman," he wrote in 1879.

The latter is frugal, even to abstemiousness, and economical to the verge of penuriousness. The former will frequently, at feasts and dances, give away the bulk of his possessions to needy friends and relatives. We must endeavor to correct this defect in the Indian's character. As affairs are now managed he has no encouragement to save.

In invoking this stereotype merely in passing, Crook revealed how the common image of the Chinese portrayed in popular culture could reach the highest echelons of the U.S. military. Nonetheless, distinctions among subject races were ultimately less important than their shared inferiority. One popular song, "Topics of the Day," written

after the Battle of Little Big Horn and while Congress was debating immigration restriction, looked forward to the removal of both the Chinese and American Indians from the continent:

There's the Chinese question too, at Congress has
pass'd through,
There's enough of heathens in the Golden State;
Now fifty pounds, I am told, they have to pay in gold,
Before they'll be allowed to emigrate;
No more they'll wash the dirt from our collars, cuffs
and shirts,
We want no Chinese laundries in our land;
But still there's one thing more should be banished
from our shore,
That's Sitting Bull and his bloodthirsty band.

The emphasis on "our land" and "our shore"--where Indians had lived for thousands of years and Chinese for a generation--linked the common undesirability, unassimilability, and "unAmericanness" of Indians and Chinese. Both groups impeded American progress and American civilization.¹⁹

The above verse appears in Murphy and Mack's McMullen Family Songster, a collection of Irish tunes published in 1879. No ethnic group in the late nineteenth century received more attention for its anti-Chinese (and anti-black) bias than the Irish. Editorials repeatedly condemned them for their extreme bigotry. The first scholarly treatment of anti-Chinese racism, published in 1909, even went so far as to single out the Irish as the key agitators behind the Chinese Exclusion Act.²⁰ William Wu takes the Irish prejudice for granted.²¹ With this in mind,

relations between the Irish and Chinese in popular culture take on an added dimension.

Popular songs expressed a variety of outlooks, many of which reinforced this Irish anti-Chinese attitude. Den Morton's "Mulcahy's Cousin Dan" (1882) describes how an Irishman would turn the country upside down if he was elected senator:

He'd make Dennis Kearney president,
Then the Chinese would have to go
Christmas would come in summer,
On the 4th of July we'd have snow.

A similar song from the 1870s tells what an Irishman would do if elected president:

I'll raise the laborers' wages, politicians I'll
reduce,
Soap and sugar I'll give away, and all kinds of
produce,
All Chinese must emigrate, and go back home again,
And when I'm there in Washington I'll stick to Senator
Blaine.

Such lyrics indicate that Senator Blaine's posturing against the Chinese in 1879 may have helped lure the sizeable Irish vote. One last, very critical song from 1873 probably captures why the Irish would have disliked the Chinese.

"John Chinaman," which was played to the tune of "Green Grow the Rushes, O," expressed all the stereotypical features of the Irish working classes--their rebelliousness, their penchant for striking, and their interest in politics:

Now Coolie labor is the cry,
'Pat' must give way to Pagan 'John,'
Whom Christian bosses, rich and sly,
Have anxiously the heart set on.
For he's a nice, cheap Chinaman;

A meek, submissive Chinaman,
Who ne'er 'turns Turk,' or 'strikes' his work
For more pay, like the Irishman.

Good 'John' knows no Trades Union schemes,
Nor what is meant by 'scab' or 'rat,'
He never calls the bosses bad names,
Or threatens him like saucy 'Pat,'
But he is a quiet Chinaman;
A harmless 'John Chinaman';
A mild, contented, patient drudge,
Or white slave of a Chinaman....

No fear that John will Congress 'bore,'
'Bout Cuba's belligerent rights
Or 'Alabama Claims,' or sore
Feel, when some cur our standard slights.
For he's an opium-using man,
An apathetic Chinaman,
'The powers that be must' surely see,
The value of John Chinaman.

A strong element of anti-Chinese sentiment is apparent in these songs, though whether these were written by the Irish or just about the Irish is unclear. Not all such songs, however, blast the Chinese. George Cooper's "The Cup o' Tay," a song in dialect from 1870, offers praise, if guarded, for the Chinese. It also spells out clearly the national beverage of each nation:

With whiskey punch galore,
How many heads are sore,
Shelalahs, too, a score or more, they beautifully play;
With all their haithin ways,
Good 'cess [luck] to thim Chinaise,
Who send us o'er the says [seas] such a gintale
[gentle] cup o' tay.

The Chinese may take away jobs, but at least they send tea in exchange.²²

In the theater, interactions between the Irish and the Chinese vary markedly from those in the dime novel. The

Irishman, like the Chinese, was himself a stock character on the American stage. He was proud, haughty, and hard-drinking, and spoke with a heavy brogue. He was also ignorant, impulsive, and jovial, but quick to anger. His female counterpart, invariably a maid or cook, was little different, and both were prone to violence. On stage the Irish turned disdain for the Chinese into an everyday activity. In Nettie H. Pelham's The Old Fashioned Husking Bee (1891), a parlor room trifle about a family gathering to shuck corn, the Chinese character has all of one line. Still, his presence is enough to irk Kitty Maloney, the servant girl, who refuses to take part. "I'll not be afther associatin' wid the loikes o' him," she exclaims. "Where's me bunnit? ... I'll be afther lavin at onct, so I will, if that haythen is comin to the huskin'." The same ethnic antagonism manifests itself in The Forty-Niners (1879) when Molly scorns Wun Lung. "What are ye doin' there now?" she says. "Go on wid ye or I'll be afther hittin' ye over the head wid me duster." Wun Lung fights back. "Il-ish gal a too muchee gab," he retorts, "--Il-ish gal shutee up." "What! Shut up is it?" shouts an outraged Molly. "An' to a leddy loike me? Do ye' know what I have a mind to do wid ye? I have a mind to chuck yer out av the windy, so I have, ye bauld headed John Chinaman yer?" Playwrights took anti-Chinese bigotry on the part of the Irish for granted. In Mary B. Horne's The Last of the Peak Sisters: or, The Great

Moral Dime Show (1892), a play about a circus freak show featuring two Chinese twins tied at the waist, the Irishman refuses to even acknowledge their existence. Although the Chinese twins have no spoken lines, the Irishman resents being in the same room with them. "They always remain without [outside]," explains one character, "because Daniel [McGinty] is so prejudiced against the Chinese." So common was such prejudice that playwrights may have felt they were gypping their audiences if they failed to include a scene with an Irish person insulting or beating a Chinese. As Fergus O'Gooligan loftily states in The Golden Gulch (1893): "ony mon that'll go off arm in arm wid a haythen Chinazer is beneath me contempt."²³

This Irish contempt for the Chinese is not without its reversals. In Crawford's Claim (1890), Mike Moore, an Irish shyster lawyer, accuses Ling Ling, a Chinese servant, of cooking him a rat. "Where is the yaller nagur," he cries, holding a pistol in one hand and the cooked rat in the other. "Where's the Mongolian thafe of the world? Where's the haythen spalphane that gave me the dish of rat soup? Be the powers, if the government can't get rid of them I'll start up a private exodus on my own account." Following this rare political comment, Moore threatens to kill Ling. "Haythen, I'll give ye one chance for your life," he says. "Efflex the taste of your damnable decoction from my mouth by an inflex of Mulligan's best whiskey, and I'll forgive

ye. Will ye do it?" "Allee lightee," responds Ling. "Have nicee rumee punchee." Ling prepares to drink, when Moore concludes with one last grisly political comment:

Here, hould on. You foreigners are gettin' too forward--wait till gentlemin drink. Haythen, join me in this toast: "Here's that the angels above may send down a dove, with wings as sharp as razors, and cut the throat of every haythen Chineee that tries to cut down the laboring man's wages." There, drink that, and may it choke ye.

Ling doesn't respond to this diatribe; rather, the two men sit down to a game of cards. Moore later undercuts his own prejudice after the two men have a wrestling match. The Chinese emerges victorious. "When the shamrock he fade in the fall, tra la," mocks Ling. "You dead, Ilish?" "No," replies Moore, "but I'm spacheless. Haythen, you downed me fair and square, and if ever you need a friend, call on Mike Moore." The comraderie of combat temporarily overcomes ethnic hostility. The identical theme of a Chinese immigrant proving his mettle and earning the respect of the Irish also occurs in Poverty Flats (1899). In Act II, Dan calls Win Lung a "rat eaten hathen" and "divilish sly fellow." Later, however, Win Lung gives evidence at a trial which saves a man's life. "Chineeman him gleet man," Win says bragging. "Fait an' ye are that," responds Dan. "Too dom bad ye are not an Irishman, an ye'd be a credit to the Irish nation."²⁴

Interethnic friendships, however brittle, could develop, but only under extreme circumstances. In the

American playwright's mind, a Chinese individual had to do something extraordinary--fight triumphantly, save a man's life--to gain the approval of the Irish. By virtue of their skin color, religion, and language, the Irish could consider themselves more American than the Chinese. To the playwright, however, both belonged to the underclass, and a hot-headed, bad-mouthing, anti-Chinese Irishman was far more amusing than one who was sober, industrious, and open-minded.

That American playwrights took the easy way out by turning the Irish into drunken buffoons should come as no surprise--that dime novelists did not suggest different audiences for the two mediums. Dime novelists evinced scarcely any interest in Irish-Chinese encounters. The two groups seldom met; they inhabited seemingly different worlds. The rare occasions when they did interact are far from conclusive. In Frank Dumont's Wide-A-Wake, the Robber King; or, The Idiot of the Black Hills (1879), Dennis Flaherty embodies the standard anti-Chinese prejudices against "'the opium-ateing divil.'" Flaherty is captured and thrown into a cave with the bound and gagged Wah Sing. "'[Y]e yaller-faced haythen,'" the Irish immigrant exclaims, "'... you dirty nagur....'" The desperate circumstances, however, compel Flaherty and Sing to join forces. Flaherty unties Sing and helps him escape. The pair survive and

fight back together. Irish and Chinese become fast friends and stand united at the novel's conclusion.²⁵

In Cowdrick's Fighting Harry, the Chief of Chained Cyclone (1889), Wah Tom asks to rent a room under a saloon and boarding-house run by Dennis and Margaret O'Mara. They are initially reluctant, but the "wily Chinese pleaded his cause so ably and so well," that the Irish couple finally give in. Wah Tom soon forms a strong attachment to the O'Mara's little daughter. He tends her and looks after her, and when ill nurses her back to health. "And from that time, too," the author noted, "the Chinese was looked upon as one of the members of the household, almost." The Chinese in the West, the author added, often suffered abuse, "but in this case the Chinaman had decidedly the advantage. He was under the protection of Dennis O'Mara, and the man who did a wrong to Wah Tom had to answer for it to him." Throughout the novel various characters mouth anti-Chinese comments; the Irish do not. Wah Tom and the O'Maras maintain a firm friendship.²⁶

One last example of the dime novelist's indifference to Irish anti-Chinese prejudice occurs in Cowdrick's Broadway Billy Abroad; or, The Bootblack Bravo of San Francisco (1890). This dime novel features numerous Chinese characters and one Irish person, Mrs. McFaddin, "a large, masculine-looking woman," who runs a cheap boarding-house in Chinatown. The lower-class Irish landlady is an accomplice

to a kidnapping. For two thousand dollars she is keeping the wealthy Emma Goodwin locked up in her house. Billy, the hero who befriends and receives help from various Chinese in the course of the novel, tricks Mrs. McFaddin to gain entry to her house, and ultimately rescues the kidnapped woman. What is noteworthy in this rather ordinary dime novel is that Mrs. McFaddin has ample reason to insult and abuse the Chinese, but she never does. The unlikable, disreputable Irish woman remains cordial in all her interactions with the Chinese throughout the novel. The author resisted the urge --if, indeed, he had one--to magnify or illustrate the anti-Chinese prejudices of the Irish.²⁷

These brief illustrations, as well as their extreme rarity, suggest a number of conclusions. Dime novelists, while incorporating the standard racial stereotypes of the period, displayed little interest in ethnic rivalries. Anti-Chinese racism remained muted: when it occurred it was miners--not the Irish, not labor unions, not other workers--that fomented it. (And miners, incidentally, did not speak with Irish accents.) The "'war o' races'" in Kingbolt Chris, the Young Hardshell Detective, it must be remembered, was incited by whites, not by the minority groups themselves. In plays, however, in the written scripts that survive, Chinese-Irish and Chinese-black confrontations often took center-stage. Interethnic fighting among the "lower orders"--the servile, servant population--amused the

theater-going audience. Why were such racial fights--and dime novels thrived on impulsive, knockdown fights--far less prevalent in the pulp literature of the period? A split seems to have emerged in popular culture: the written play attracted a different audience than the dime novel.

Theatrical performances whose records have survived may have been more highbrow than the cheap book. Plays, after all, received reviews in middle-class newspapers, such as the New York Times and the New York Tribune. Dime novels did not. Respectable, genteel journals, such as Atlantic Monthly, looked down on dime novels and scoffed at them far more often than they did the theater.²⁸

Other clues suggest class differences between the stage and the dime novel. As noted earlier, the Chinese on stage lust for and lunge after American women whether white, black, or Irish. The excessive farcicality and absurdity of these scenes cushioned the horror of such events, but these moments captured the fears and dangers of Chinese sexuality and interbreeding that were frequently voiced by middle-class politicians and editors. Dime novelists, on the other hand, were far less preoccupied with racial purity and Chinese licentiousness. Although passionate expressions and sexual suggestions were major reasons for middle-class disapproval of pulp literature,²⁹ dime novelists did not invoke the image of sex-crazed Chinese immigrants in their romantic or more lurid scenes. Working-class readers may

have been less concerned and less easily frightened by the specter of the unleashed Chinese libido than were their more prudish middle-class neighbors.

One final indication of these class-based distinctions emerge in the Chinese-as-rat-eater image. As noted earlier, this stereotype appeared differently in the two mediums. Although indiscriminately called "rat-eater" in print and on stage, dime novelists almost never portrayed the Chinese as actually preparing, cooking, or eating rats.³⁰ "Rat-eater" was a handy epithet and little more. On stage, however, cooking and consuming rats is common fare for the Chinese. Eating rats, in fact, is often central to the plot and helped to stir up clashes with other characters. To the audience, no doubt, the repeated image of the Chinese physically holding rats, baking rats, and consuming rats had a deeply visceral effect that no dime novel could match. Night after night, Americans could watch white actors dressed up as Chinese men eating rodents on stage. They could look at magazines and newspapers, along with advertisements and trademarks, and see pictures of Chinese immigrants stuffing themselves on rats and mice. Why were such scenes lacking in the dime novel?

It is likely, as Michael Denning argues, that pulp literature appealed directly to working-class sensibilities. Dime novels in this period, although wholeheartedly American and patriotic, evinced little contempt for foreigners or

immigrants. Each ethnic group--whether Chinese, black, Irish, Jewish, or American Indian--did, to be sure, possess unique and demeaning characteristics in popular culture, but dime novelists did not manipulate them to create antagonism or promote violence as consistently as did playwrights. Novelists, for example, portrayed the Irish, presumably a key segment of their working-class readership, sympathetically and generally positively rather than as bigoted or ignorant. Authors gave no indication that the Chinese did not belong in the United States. They had a right, like every other race and ethnic group to be present in the drama of the nation. Several reasons may account for this. Pulp writers may simply not have wanted to offend different groups of readers. Furthermore, they may have been leery of treading on so volatile an issue as racial conflict. Ethnic clashes and anti-Chinese characters could have disturbed readers and inhibited finding a larger working-class audience.

Playwrights, on the other hand, may have considered their audience above the fray. Middle-class viewers, while perhaps frightened by unruly lower orders, could still lump them all together, distance themselves from them, and find their antics entertaining. These audiences enjoyed watching different minority groups act irrationally, impetuously, and foolishly, as long as white Anglo-Saxon characters appeared to maintain order. This distinction between working-class

and middle-class popular culture ought not be overstated, for often they overlapped, but subtle distinctions emerged that deserve closer analysis.

Perhaps no play illustrates the class-based differences in popular culture more clearly than T.S. Denison's Patsy O'Wang. An Irish Farce with a Chinese Mix-Up (1895).³¹ In this drawing-room comedy, Dr. and Mrs. Fluke, a respectable Protestant couple with two Irish servants, hire Patsy O'Wang, a cook from Hong Kong. The play pokes gentle fun at the Flukes and their do-gooding, Christian friend, Miss Simper:

Miss Simper: I have come to-day in the interest of the missionary cause.

Mrs. Fluke: Wont you step back into the parlor where we can talk at leisure?

Miss Simper: Oh no, I'm in a dreadful hurry. The African Argonauts meet at eleven and I preside. We start our first worker to Ashantee to-morrow. At 4 p.m. the Mongolian Mediators have a meeting and at 8 p.m. is the debate in which we shall answer the Cannibal Calumniators.

Dr. Fluke: You are a very busy bee, Miss Simper.

Miss Simper: No, I've resigned from the Busy Bees; concentrating you see. They say you have a new Chinese cook, Mrs. Fluke.

Mrs. Fluke: Not I. He's the doctor's importation. Talk to him.

Miss Simper: (Enthusiastically.) Oh doctor, tell me all about him. My heart bleeds for the millions of Asia who sit in outer darkness.

Dr. Fluke: My dear Miss Simper, he is a gold nugget; he will be a capital acquisition in your mission school, so intelligent, so docile, so affectionate, so--so--

Miss Simper: Just so. Oh, I'm perfectly delighted. Doctor, does he--ah--has he doffed the Chinese garb yet and donned the raiment of civilization?³²

The "heathenish" Chinese are later contrasted with the Irish, who work for the genteel, middle-class family. Mrs. Fluke, herself, remains skeptical about the Chinese cook's arrival. "Who knows but he may poison us all," she says. Mike and Norah, the two Irish servants are far more resistant. "Ah Norah, it's an outrage," says Mike, "that's the whole blissid truth. To think of a blackgyard haythen cookin' for dacint people." "It's a disgrace," responds Norah, "I'll give notice, I will--." Mike resolves: "I'll not ate a bit o' his dirthy cookin', faith I'll not." Throughout the play Mike and Norah look down on the newcomer and resent his presence and odd ways.³³

Patsy O'Wang, however, is not the typical Chinese immigrant. He has, Dr. Fluke states, "a slight flaw in his pedigree." Patsy is the son of a Chinese woman and "a wild Irish officer" stationed in Hong Kong. Because of this interbreeding he possesses "a remarkable dual nature." Strong tea makes him Chinese, while whiskey transforms him into an Irishman. As a result, Dr. Fluke is warned: "Never under any circumstances let him taste a drop of whiskey."³⁴

The viewer, of course, looks forward to this ethnically split personality soon to be revealed on stage. Patsy arrives, polite and humble as can be. "Velly much glad see Missee Fluke," he says upon introduction. "How charming! So childlike!" Miss Simper observes. Mike and Norah clearly

despise him. "All samee nice day," Patsy says. "Go back with yez to the kitchen," Norah responds brusquely. When the employers disappear, Mike leads Patsy into mischief. He takes him into Dr. Fluke's office and Patsy begins playing with the different medical machines. He unintentionally hurts one of the doctor's patients who screams "you saffron colored rat catcher! ... you moon-faced Mongolian monkey!" The patient demands brandy which Patsy fetches and proceeds to swig. "Dlink heap toddy," he remarks. "Um! velly good." Patsy continues drinking from the bottle. "Whoopee! feel good! Allee same day feel bully!"³⁵

Patsy is soon drunk. He kicks his feet up, then rubs his head. "Where am I?" he asks, "What am I? Now I have it. I'm an Irishman again.... I was this way once before in Hong Kong when I got drunk in the barracks. Whiskey brings out the Irish in me." Enjoying his inebriation, he resolves to remain Irish forever. "I wont be a Chinaman," he declares. "I wont take a blessed drop of anything but poteen [Irish whiskey]." He coils his queue around his head, rips off his Chinese garments, and puts on the doctor's coat. He then throws away his wooden shoes. "Cow leather's good enough for me," he says strutting proudly across the stage. "Now me toilet is more to me likin'.... I'll thrash the whole crowd if they lay hands on me."³⁶

Patsy, now Irish, acts boisterously. He flails about, punches his fists in the air, and behaves wildly. Dr. Fluke

returns and orders Norah to make a large kettle of tea. Patsy prefers being Irish--less work, more whiskey--and resists drinking it. Fluke finally forces some tea down his throat and Patsy becomes calmer. "It's working!" Fluke exclaims. "Obedient already." The Irish servants both recoil in fright. "I think he's possissed," says Mike. An alarmed Norah decides to leave and Mike follows her. "First he's a haythen Chinee," he says. "Then he takes a drop too much an he goes wild ... and says he's an Irishman.... Another dram'll turn him into a Dago, I belave. I quits to-day, doctor."³⁷

Patsy outsmarts Dr. Fluke, however, and stops drinking the tea. "[Y]ou can't fill me up with tea," he declares, "and turn me back into a Chinaman." Patsy remains Irish. He resolves to enter politics and become an alderman. "I'll niver vote a shplit ticket," Mike quips, "half Irish half Chinay." Patsy has the final word. He sings a song to the tune of "Pat Malloy" recounting his life story:

My father was a Hooligan, me mother was Chinay
And I was born in Hong Kong ten thousand miles away...
Me Christian name was Patsy and O'Wang me name Chinay;
An' while they all took todody I drank nothin but green
tay.

One day I brewed the punch meself an' then I tried the
same:

Hooray! it touched a vital spot, it lit the Irish
flame.

True son of ould Hibernia, I struck for higher pay,
I swung it like a gentleman, I drank no more green
tay...

[But sailing to America, I drank and drank the tea]
For twenty hours or more I lay, that poison did me
rack:

I rose a haythen Chinaman, a queue hung down me back.

Me almond eyes were set askew, me queue twirled round
me pate,
They called me Chin, I made the duff and boiled the
captain's mate.
A fool for luck the proverb says, a fool O'Wang must
be,
For now I'm turned true Irishman, bad cess [luck] to
all Chinees.
And in this free Ameriky I'll have a word to say
I'm goin' into politics, I'll drink no more green
tay....³⁸

This middle-class view of obedient Chinese and rowdy Irishmen typifies respectable opinion of the day. Both immigrant groups act like juveniles, ignorant and rash. Stereotypes are crucial: the Irish are livelier, headstrong, more demonstrative, prepared to "strike for higher pay"; the Chinese are reserved, docile, better behaved. From the economic and social standpoint of the Flukes, however, they were nearly identical--only a beverage apart. Both groups existed to serve them. To Dr. Fluke, the key authority figure, the Irish-Chinese mix was a delightful diversion, "a most extraordinary case" for him to study.³⁹ His various servants serve as surrogate children that he can command and manipulate. At the same time, the play is predicated on the Irish (as "older" children) feeling superior to the Chinese, and the Flukes being upset when Patsy changes nationality. Their goal--predictability and control--would be best achieved by transforming Patsy back to their preferred ethnicity. The same Irish and Chinese stereotypes appear elsewhere in popular culture, but such a scenario would not take place in the dime novel. The

superiority and inferiority of different racial and ethnic groups do exist in pulp literature but seldom surface so blatantly. Nor does it serve as the crux of the plot. Only on stage are such distinctions central to the action. Playwrights demonstrated a need to pit ethnic groups against each other that dime novelists did not share.

This tendency to compare the Chinese to the Irish and to other ethnic groups prevailed far more in middle-class popular culture than in that of the working classes. In fact, such respectable journals as Lippincott's, Scribner's, Atlantic Monthly, Galaxy and others could hardly treat the Chinese in fiction or in essays without contrasting them with other members of the underclass. In "Miss Maloney on the Chinese Question," an unsigned article in Scribner's from 1870, a fictional Irish servant recounts her first meeting with a Chinese competitor: "he'd be lookin' on wid his eyes cocked up'ard like two-poomp handles, an' widdout a speck or smitch o' whishkers on him ... grinnin' and' waggin his pig-tail.... Arrah, an' would I be sittin' wid a haythen an' he a-eatin' wid drum-sticks--yes, an atin' dogs an' cats ... which it is the custom of them Chinesers." Miss Maloney, the article continued, had the habit of secretly stealing food from the family's groceries. So adept is Fing Wing at "ketchin' an' copyin'" her ways, that he innocently imitates her and steals food before the mistress's eyes. Her thievery detected, the mistress fires

her at once. The displaced Irish servant is shown leaving unceremoniously, the Chinese newcomer grinning in the doorway.⁴⁰ [See figure 3.3]

Songs geared for a middle-class audience also connect the two groups as servants. Sep Winner's "The Coolie Chinee" appears in Amateur. A Repository of Music, Literature, and Art, a genteel Philadelphia journal, in 1871:

We sent off our Biddy, and also our cook
Because their wages were high,
And as a domestic we went for and took
A Coolie their place to supply.

The same theme runs through "Mary Ann and Chyng Loo," an article by Margaret Hosmer in Lippincott's from 1870 on the difficulty of finding a good housekeeper. In this story, the Irish servant is not dishonest, simply incompetent and disrespectful. The author described Mary Ann Mahoney as "a pitiless woman ... sinister ... hideous ... incorrigible ... vindictive, contemptuous and impregnably obstinate...." She burns dinner, drops dishes, and gets drunk. She pales beside Chyng Loo who cooks well, cleans meticulously, and learns his tasks at once. As if this isn't enough, the author took one last slap at the Irish by noting that unlike Mary Ann, Chyng Loo washes his hands before making tea. Such cleanliness is foreign to the Irish. Hosmer also managed to attack blacks as servants by opening the story with an inept "Ethiopian," who was hot-tempered and disobedient.⁴¹



Figure 3.3. Chinese man v. Irish woman: Who makes the better domestic? This was the question often posed by middle-class journals.

Source: Scribner's Monthly, November 1870.

Black-Chinese antagonism forms the basis of Jennie Woodville's "Chang-how and Anarky," another Lippincott's article that appeared eight years later. Again, the qualities of the two races as servants are contrasted, and the black gets the worst of it. Anarky, tough and sassy, can't stand the diminutive Chang-how. Her enmity leads to violence. She grabs the Chinese immigrant, swings him in the air, and after a long fight, throws him behind the chicken coop. She is arrested and imprisoned, leaving Chang, presumably, to continue as servant.⁴²

"Many of the defensive articles on behalf of the Chinese," Stuart Creighton Miller has noted shrewdly, "were thinly disguised attacks on the Irish." Miller could have added blacks as well. But even in articles that defended or criticized the Chinese that had nothing to do with the Irish or with blacks, middle-class authors could not resist poking jabs at them. In "Wash Lo," a piece in Lippincott's from 1881, Frank D.Y. Carpenter praised Chinese washermen for their ability to write accurate laundry tickets, a skill that "other nationalities--Irish, German, or colored--" simply lacked. Commenting on Chinese proficiency in the "profession of shovelling," Carpenter added that "only very deliberate nations, like the Irish and the Chinese, can furnish steadfast navvies." In "The Childlike and Bland Chinees," a sympathetic article from 1878 in Potter's

American Monthly, Margaret Hosmer (author of "Mary Ann and Chyng Loo") described various Chinese characteristics. In one anecdote she described Hong Chy, the only Chinese dishwasher on a large boarding-house staff "and though there was a flavor of African, the prevailing domestic ingredient was strongly Hiberian [sic]. Pat naturally hated Sambo, and both united in trying to make the existence of my patron, Hong Chy, a perfect Sahara."⁴³

Authors took potshots regardless of their attitudes concerning the Chinese. In "Glimpses of John Chinaman," a piece in Lippincott's from 1873, Prentice Mulford waited until the last paragraph to interject the Irish. "'Get out, ye long-tailed baste!'" the fictional Irishman says. "'An' wad ye put me on a livil with that--that baboon?'" Mulford also threw in a reference to American Indians. Even the generally liberal Mark Twain, who fervently defended the Chinese, did so at the expense of the Irish. In "Goldsmith's Friend Abroad Again," a series of humorous, fictional letters Twain wrote for Galaxy in 1870-71 which recounted a Chinese immigrant's experiences in the United States, he indicted Americans for their hypocrisy and bigotry. He singled out the Irish who abuse and attack the poor Chinese immigrant. "'This Ching divil comes till Ameriky to take the bread out o' dacent intelligent white men's mouths,'" one Irish antagonist jeers, "'and whin they try to defind their rights there's a dale o' fuss made about

it.'" The innocent Ah Song Hi is then set upon by dogs after which two policemen arrest him for disorderly conduct. "'Rot there, ye furrin spawn,'" the jail guard yells, "'till ye lairn that there's no room in America for the likes of ye or your nation.'"44

Novelist Thomas Bailey Aldrich, like the playwrights cited above, also managed to comment on Irish sinophobia. In The Stillwater Tragedy (1880), a novel about a strike-torn community in the Northeast, an Irish laborer mouths anti-Chinese epithets. One of the first things workers do when the strike begins is destroy the town's Chinese laundry.⁴⁵ Such scenes are curiously absent from working-class fiction.⁴⁶ Chinese-Irish comparisons also appeared in pictorial form. A cover illustration for Puck in 1878 contrasted the meek, unassuming Chinese with the haughty, disreputable Irish. [See figure 3.4] The Chinese come to the United States with the limited aim of making money by cooking and washing and then returning home to China. The Irish, simian-looking and mean, come seeking liquor and political patronage, ultimately destined to fill prison cells at Sing Sing.⁴⁷

In other respects, middle-class popular culture echoes that of the working classes in its depiction of "John Chinaman." He is quick to imitate, quick to learn, loves to gamble, loves to cheat. "John is a most apt and intelligent labor-machine," Prentice Mulford wrote, with "an untiring



Figure 3.4. Chinese v. Irish: Which immigrant makes the better worker? This cartoon leaned toward the Chinese.

Source: Puck, May 15, 1878.

mechanical character." He cared nothing for privacy or living arrangements. "An anthill, a beehive, a rabbit warren," Mulford explained, "are his models for domestic comfort...." His physical appearance is also identical. Chang-how, the servant who displaced Anarky, had "a quaint, cunning smile" on his "placid face," a "wiry frame," and stooping shoulders. As usual the Chinese are always grinning, looking childlike, and acting docilely.

"Chinamen," Margaret Hosmer stated, "are submissive by nature" and "cunning ... in every way...." They are sneaky and scampish, greedy and sly. They are, of course, ugly. "Compared with the Caucasian in a physical sense," Frank D.Y. Carpenter wrote in Lippincott's in 1881, "he is what the bronco mule is by the side of the thorough-bred horse.... They are small and stunted in growth, and their faces are sadly deficient in agreeable expression." Their "gaping mouths" and "general appearance of inanity," he added, make them look like the inmates in "our idiot asylums." Aldrich called them "featureless." Their smoking and eating habits follow them wherever they went. "A smell of stale oil, opium and sandalwood," Hosmer wrote, "always rose at the name of a Chinaman, and a vision of stewed rats accompanied it in our family mind." As in dime novels, the Chinese are compared to the cats and rats they allegedly consumed. Hosmer described one "cowering Chinaman" as having a voice "like the yelp of a falsetto-toned dog," and

others likened them to kittens, panthers, fish, birds, and foxes. Perhaps it is best all around, Carpenter advised, to think of the Chinese immigrant as "an animal and not a man...."⁴⁸

The Chinese images presented in middle-class organs of popular culture largely coincided with those found in more working-class outlets. The key difference, however, was the middle-class propensity, indeed almost obsession, to treat the Chinese in relation to other subject groups. Their traits were compared, categorized, and catalogued with competing ethnic minorities--particularly Irish and blacks--in such a way that their relative merits to American society could be gauged. Middle-class writers, sometimes favorable to the Chinese, sometimes not, tended to place them and all other ethnic groups on a common scale so as to be able to measure who was more American--or who could become more American--by their standards. Middle-class writers also emphasized the conflicts among these various groups. Working-class solidarity was an anomaly--and perhaps a threat. This competitive mentality seldom surfaced in the dime novel. Fights occurred frequently but seldom based on ethnic differences. Chinese characters emerged more as individuals--stereotyped and circumscribed, to be sure--but free from this overriding, condescending air of judgment. In the dime novel the abused Chinese immigrant fought, struggled, even occasionally succeeded on his own in a

manner absent from the paternalistic image drawn in middle-class journals of popular culture.

What They Told The Children

Were adults at all ashamed of how they portrayed the Chinese in popular culture? Judging by what they told their children the answer is no. The image of the Chinese presented to the nation's young did not vary markedly from that presented to their parents. A survey of the major children's periodicals in the era of exclusion--Youth's Companion (Boston), St. Nicholas (New York), Wide Awake (Boston), Harper's Young People (New York) and others--largely reinforces the standard Chinese stereotypes, despite a few notable exceptions. Stories and articles for juveniles, for example, tend to be gentler and less rancorous. Violence seldom occurs. The Chinese are less evil than they were simply strange. Authors wrote more sympathetically of them though also more condescendingly. While some took considerable pains to humanize the Chinese, most simply used them for amusement.

Many pieces in children's magazines clearly praise the Chinese. "A True Story," printed in Youth's Companion (1879), tells the tale of a Chinese boy attempting to rescue his father who is held captive by the English in the English-French-Chinese War in 1856. The boy overcomes numerous obstacles and gives his life to save his father.

The author presented the Chinese as noble and upstanding and emphasized their respect for filial duty and family honor. "Fun in a Chinese School Room," a pleasant story in Harper's Young People (1880), describes children playing and enjoying themselves in a Chinese classroom halfway around the world. St. Nicholas printed "A Strange Music" (1880), a lengthy article in the form of a dialogue between a learned uncle and his niece and nephew on the beautiful, unusual sounds of Chinese instruments. Meticulously illustrated, the article gives a detailed history of Chinese music since antiquity and a full description of different musical instruments. "A Chinaman's Queue," a short piece in Wide Awake (1876), and "The Chinese Queue," a similar one in Youth's Companion (1880), simply explains the origins, significance, and maintenance of the Chinese braid. Youth's Companion printed an article in 1880 lauding the Chinese civil service and how Chinese merchants value an honest reputation. Responding to a child's letter on the importance of the intellect to social advancement in China, an editor of St. Nicholas (1880) responded: "In no other country is education held in higher esteem than in China, where the government encourages learning, by making it the road to distinction." Another article in St. Nicholas a year later praises the Chinese for their ingenuity in describing how they tie whistles to carrier pigeons as a means of scaring off hawks.⁴⁹

Clara G. Dolliver's "Miss Juniper's Ward," a short story in Wide Awake (1878), tells the heartwarming tale of Ahoy Choy, an abandoned Chinese baby, raised by two American women, Miss Juniper and Aunt Dorcas. The child is cheery and strong and becomes an "apt, obedient and painstaking little scholar...." Ahoy even learns a few words "in the hideous language of the Celestial Land," taught her by Hung Goon, "a good-natured old Coolie" who works for the family. When taunted at school by two classmates--one of them Irish--Ahoy fights back spunkily. "Miss Juniper," the author noted, "had taught her to not be ashamed of her race." The story follows Ahoy to adulthood, marriage, and motherhood, and ends with Miss Juniper moving in with her family, "perfectly happy in the merry, loving, almond-eyed household."⁵⁰

Such positive portrayals of Chinese culture are not rare, but they seldom come without the common stereotypes. When Ahoy Choy appears on Miss Juniper's doorstep, for example, Aunt Dorcas sensed the baby's nationality by its odor. The infant is reeking, she says, of "'all sorts of Chinese smells.'" Dolliver needlessly interjected that the Chinese language was "hideous." She also made repeated references to Ahoy's obedient nature and her "oblique" and "almond-shaped eyes." Ahoy "was a beauty," dolliver concluded, "as Chinese beauties go...." Limitations are implied.⁵¹

Most stories sympathetic toward the Chinese still manage to reinforce these various stereotypes. Mrs. Nellie Eyster's "Tong Sing Kow," a piece in Wide Awake in 1876, is a similar, uplifting account of a Chinese child, this time a boy, in the United States. The author clearly likes the nine-year-old, pig-tailed, "almond-eyed Oriental." He is well-behaved, possesses a "busy brain," and "shrank from men or boys who used profane language." Regardless of the author's sympathies, Tong Sing Kow's Chineseness is unmistakable. He walks like a "squirrel," learns "like a parrot," and moves "as noiselessly as a cat." He wears clothing with long flowing sleeves and five mysteriously hidden pockets that no American could detect. When asked if "'Chinamen eat rats'" the young boy responds: "'Yes. Nice great big China rats very good, very.'" American rats, however, Sing adds, were not as tasty. Part of the article is taken up with the attempts of Sing's teacher to save the "darkened soul of the little Pagan." Sing does not become a Christian, but he does begin to question his own beliefs. Chinese religion comes across as silly and supernatural, and Sing is forced to admit that his native faith is rather strange. Strangeness, in fact, is the message that comes through most loudly, strangeness of the Chinese religion and strangeness of the Chinese people. Tong Sing Kow is an "odd little stranger" with a "little elfish face" who wears "strange dress" and has odd thoughts. Although fairly

Americanized by the story's end, he still retains "the uninviting peculiarities of our large Chinese population."⁵²

So ingrained were Chinese stereotypes throughout the country that authors for the young could not get around them. J.T. Trowbridge wrote "Chin Fee" for Youth's Companion in 1880. He extolled his Chinese character but could not break out of the set mold. Even the virtues of the Chinese fell into the usual categories. Chin Fee "had an intelligent face, and his manners were quiet and self-possessed.... he was an honest, faithful, [and] devoted servant ... an ingenious son of an ingenious race." Chin Fee is the story's hero. He boldly gives his life to save his master's stolen goods. He nonetheless possesses the standard repertoire of Chinese qualities. He is "small of stature" with a "faint smile" and "sallow, wan face...." The "little heathen," as the author constantly called him, "was not brave." He often moves in "a noiseless way" and has an air "of satisfied cunning." Perhaps most interesting of all is that when his master unjustly strikes him, Chin Fee "was cut to the heart. Even a Chinese boy," the author pointed out, "has what we call feelings." Of such facts the author needed to remind--or instruct--his young readers.⁵³

Few things were more pronounced than this sense of differentness. The Chinese are so foreign that American children have to be taught that they have human feelings.

Story after story stresses their exotic nature and bizarre habits. "The Chinese are a queer people," wrote one author in Youth's Companion in 1879, and practice "strange and cruel customs." Amanda B. Harris, a frequent contributor to children's magazines, explained in Youth's Companion in 1880 that "their oriental faces and odd ways always excite curiosity." In declining a piece of Chinese cake, she commented: "Like all Chinese things it was queer." In an article for Wide Awake the same year Harris noted the variety of Chinese complexions and facial features to dispel "the frequent assertion that Chinamen all look alike." Nonetheless, "this strange people," she added, possessed "a simplicity and docility that is almost amusing...." Harris was not alone. This "odd-faced people," another author wrote, emit a "strange, unearthly odor" and utter "strange, jerky sounds for talk." An article in St. Nicholas (1875) described their "queer names" as "sort of monosyllabic beads strung together with hyphens." A story serialized in Harper's Young People (1880) notes their "queer faces and gestures." Chinese towns presented "many curious sights," the Chinese people "made a very curious picture."⁵⁴

Some stories, like "Tong Sing Kow," noted above, stress the peculiarities of Chinese religion. So does one in St. Nicholas (1879) aptly named "A Curious Monastery." This brief piece mentions the Chinese priests' "strange idea of religious duty" and belittles the rituals of their faith.

It also pokes fun at the "queer house" and "curious religious edifices" perched on stilts in the mountains where the priests dwelled. The piece concludes by suggesting "what a jolly thing it would be" for an American boy to saw through those stilts "and let the whole affair come tumbling down the rocks. It would make a splendid crash, and it would be so easy to do it!" Another article on Oriental peculiarities noted "all that mummary" involved in Chinese rites. These include (to insure honesty while taking an oath) such practices as breaking a saucer against the witness-box, burning a candle rubbed against the neck of a chicken, and chopping off the chicken's head. "The oddest customs of all," the article concluded, "are those of the Chinese." The Chinese consistently come across as a weird, bizarre people, as different from Americans as night and day. Amanda B. Harris may have summed this up best in her 1879 article on the love of upper-class Chinese ladies for pet crickets. "All the children who are old enough to read the Youth's Companion," she stated, "know that the Chinese are queer people, who do a great many queer things."⁵⁵

Much of this queerness focuses on food and food habits. "You would see some strange things," an article in The Children's Hour, a Philadelphia monthly, lectured its youthful audience in 1871, "were you to visit the land beneath your feet, especially in the eating line." Harris agreed. "Their manner of eating was ludicrous," she wrote

in one story. "You have heard that they use rats and puppies to make pies of," she said in another, "and cook a certain kind of bird's nest when they want a peculiarly nice dish ...; how they shave their heads, all but a pig-tail, and eat with chopsticks, and many other strange things about their way of life." Children's magazines zero in on unusual Chinese dishes even if extraneous to the article. "Little Travelers," a short piece in St. Nicholas (1877) on what babies were like in different Asian cultures, noted that it was not uncommon for a Chinese infant to "spurn the rice of his father's table, and feast upon delicate puppy-stew, or bird's-nest soup."⁵⁶

Such "delicacies" only magnify Chinese oddness. A poem entitled "Queer People" in St. Nicholas (1876) devoted an entire section to the Chinese:

I should like to bring
My friend Ching Ling,
And give him an introduction.
Now confess to me
That you rarely see
Such a curious foreign production!
From his shaven pate to his turned-up toes,
His singular costume plainly shows
That he thinks his way the best.
He is ready to swear,
With a serious air,
That of all the countries under the sun,
His own dear China is the only one
With wisdom supremely blest.
Dogs and rats are good in their place,
Birds'-nest soups may a banquet grace,
Chop-sticks, too, will do very well,
If you play the regular Chinese swell....

Fanciful poems and sing-song rhymes featuring the Chinese and their eating habits provided steady fare for children's

magazines. Mrs. M.E. Blake's "The Tragical History of Chang Fung Loo," was a long, humorous poem in Wide Awake (1879) devoted entirely to an imaginary Chinese boy who would eat anything from "frog" to "dog" to

Elephants' trunk and tiger roast,
Boa Constrictor served up on toast,
Walrus haunch and Zebra stew,
Rump steak cut from the Horned Gnu...
Crocodile tails and Camels' humps,
Monkeys cut into strips and lumps....

While playful and certainly exaggerated, the poet still latched on to the common stereotype of the indiscriminating Chinese palate. It is also notable that while the text itself mentions, surprisingly, no rodents or vermin, one of the illustrations depicts the unsated Chinese youth salivating over a rat. [See figure 3.5] In Mrs. Lizzie W. Champney's "That Small Piece Boy From China," a poem in Harper's Young People (1881), a Chinese boy is lofted skyward by a kite. He shouts out:

Me no likee English junkee,
English chowchow too no nice.
Why no can some roasted monkey?
What for not some piecee mice?⁵⁷

Even poems that fail to make a direct connection between the Chinese and their appetite for rats and cats still often stress their mutual affection. "Pinafore Rhymes," for example, features a kitten playing with the

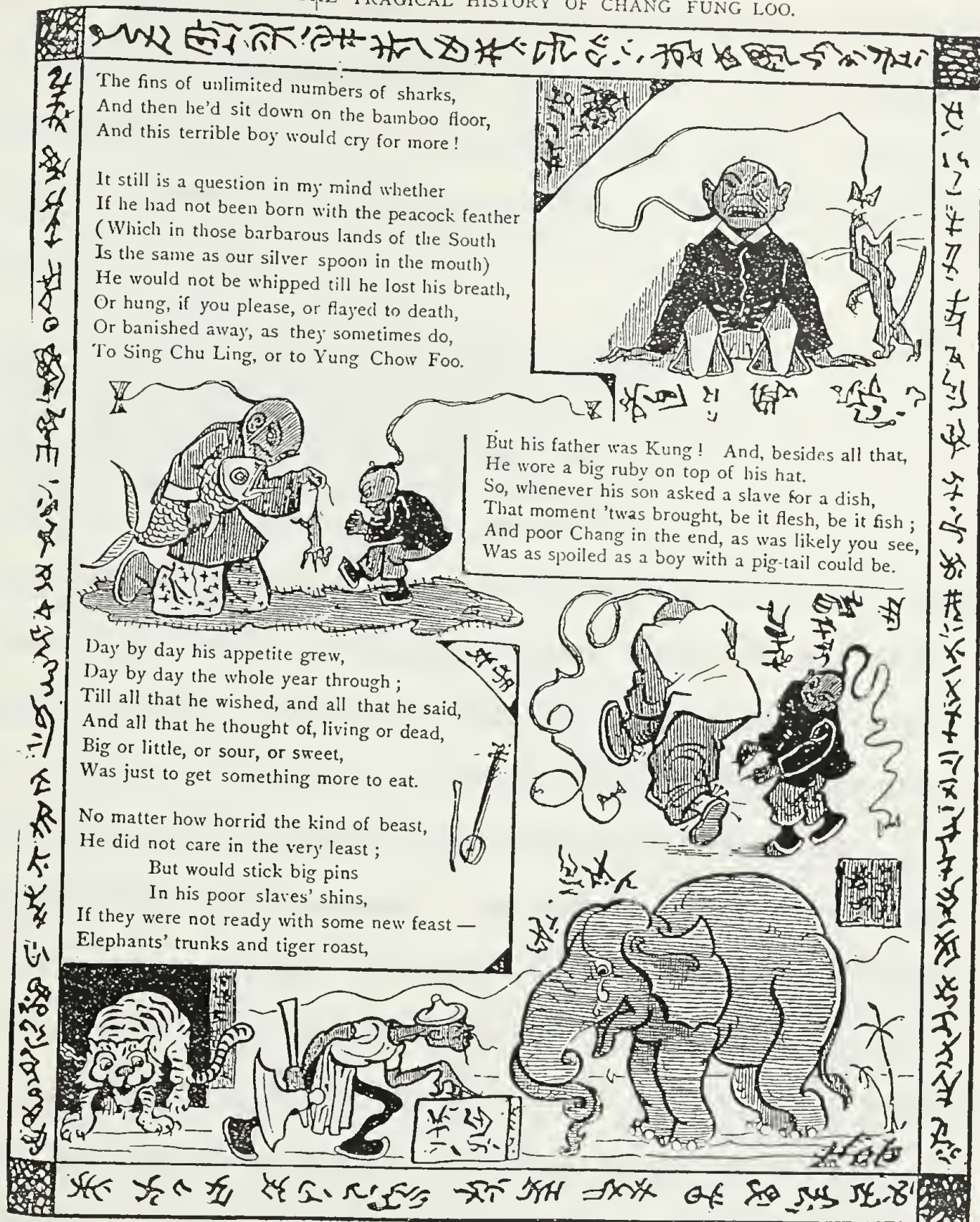


Figure 3.5. The caricatured Chinese man with the ubiquitous rat and cat. Stereotypes were not just for grown-ups.

Source: Wide Awake, November 1879.

queue of "Yee-Lee, the Chinaman," as he walks down the street. "The Mandarin and His Rat" recounts in six verses the friendship between Chinese and rodent. [See figure 3.6] One other fantastic poem from Wide Awake (1879) about a boy who skates around the world makes the final transformation of Chinese into rat:

... At length in haste
They sprang athwart the Chinese Wall:
Four hundred-million rat-tails all
Fly up, astonished, in the air,
And with one general wonder--stare,
Eight-hundred-million almond eyes
Squint their unspeakable surprise!

The Chinese, with their "rat-tails" flying upward, may have well been the image many middle-class American children carried with them. The constant references to Chinese eating rats and playing with rats and the other strange animals they put in their mouths accentuated their uniqueness and freakishness. Reference after reference reinforced this Chinese singularity and how they differed from all other people in the world. It is thus little wonder that an author had to point out to children that the Chinese had feelings just like other human beings.⁵⁸

Many of these stories and poems, of course, had no ulterior motives nor any intentions of turning children into young racists. Most authors wanted simply to entertain and the Chinese were an easy subject to make fun of. Palmer Cox's "The Funny Mandarin" (1879), for example, had no blatantly offensive or demeaning lyrics, although the

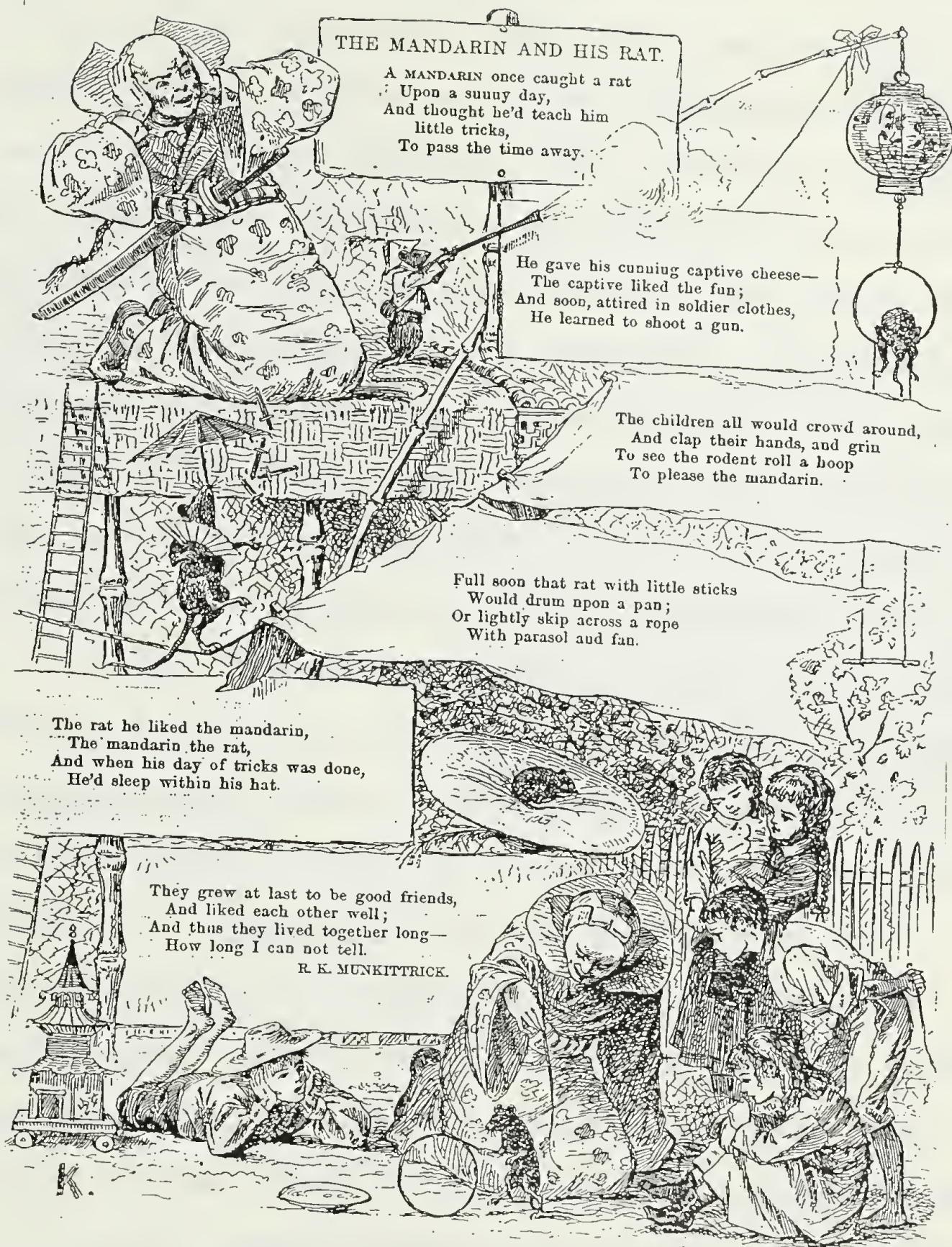


Figure 3.6. Chinese and rats: the best of friends. Through poems and illustrations such as these, American children learned to connect the two.

Source: Harper's Young People, September 21, 1880.

illustrations relied on distorted caricatures. [See figure 3.7] Such innocent portrayals were less insulting than they were condescending. Louisa May Alcott's Under the Lilacs, a novel serialized in St. Nicholas (1878), featured a Punch and Judy show with a Chinese man and woman represented by two potatoes. They both get decapitated at the show's end: "poor Chan expired in such strong convulsions that his head rolled down among the audience. Miss Ki Hi peeped to see what became of her victim, and the shutter decapitated her likewise, to the great delight of the children, who passed around the head, pronouncing a 'Potato' pantomime 'first-rate fun.'" The Chinese were good for a joke and for other diversions and rainy-day activities. A cartoon in Harper's Young People (1880) shows a little white girl tugging a Chinese man's queue pretending, or believing, it is a bell. [See figure 3.8] Wide Awake printed instructions and diagrams on how to turn an empty eggshell into "a showy-looking Chinaman." Other articles refer to youthful "John Chinaman" as "Johnnie," and to his family as "Mrs. 'John' and all the 'Johns' junior." Such patronizing could be more direct. In 1876, Youth's Companion printed a review of an eight-volume history of the Franco-Prussian War written by two Chinese scholars. "Some of the assumptions of the work," the reviewer stated, "are very amusing, for the authors seem to think that Europe has just attained the civilization of China in the fifth century before Christ."



THE FUNNY MANDARIN.

BY PALMER COX.

THERE was a funny mandarin
Who had a funny way,
Of sliding down the balustrade
A dozen times a day.

With arms in air and streaming hair,
At risk of bone and brain,
Around and round the winding stair
He slid the rail again.

The "surest" aim may miss the game,
The "safest" ship go down,
And one mistake will bring to blame
The wisest man in town.

And thus it ran, that daring man,
Who never thought to fail,
At last, in spite of every plan,
Went gliding off the rail.

The servants then, unlucky men,
Began to laugh and grin,
Which, like a lion in its den,
Aroused that mandarin.

"Ho, ho!" said he, "you laugh at me?
Now, slaves, you each shall slide!"
And when they all had met a fall,
He laughed until he cried.



Figure 3.7. Chinese man-child: ever grinning, ever playing, ever childlike.

Source: St. Nicholas, December 1879.



"WILL IT RING, MAMMA, IF I PULL?"

Figure 3.8. Is this a respectful portrayal? Cartoonists focused more on the queue than on any other part of the Chinese body.

Source: Harper's Young People, March 2, 1880.

Such smug comments characterize the attitude toward the Chinese relayed in children's literature. As in adult popular culture, the Chinese immigrant is individually and collectively referred to as the "heathen Chineese" wearing a "meaningless smile" and a "sickly grin." He is also synonymous with irreligion. In Katharine D. Smith's "Half a Dozen Housekeepers," a story serialized in St. Nicholas (1878) about life in a female seminary, one girl yearns to be a Christian. "'What a perfect heathen I am,' burst out Josie. 'I can't feel any of these things any more than if I was a Chinaman. I wonder if I shall ever get waked up.'"⁵⁹

The Chinese remain in benumbed slumber, wallowing in paganism and living in darkness. They reside in "small, dirty hovels" on "narrow and dirty" streets in "the most wretched part of the city." They live like insects "clustering together like bees" and "pouring into the ship ... like a stream of ants." To children the Chinese are animals. The "dismal" sounds the Chinese make are "suggestive of a dog shut out on a cold night." Novelist Charles Dudley Warner, co-author with Mark Twain of The Gilded Age, wrote in St. Nicholas (1879) "that all Chinamen --even the smallest--have tails...." Animal rations sufficed for them. As Student and Schoolmate (1870) pointed out, "the patient Chinese ... works for wages so trifling that an American would starve upon them." Children learned,

just like their parents, that the backward "half-civilized" Chinese loved gambling and opium. Gambling, in fact, Amanda B. Harris explained, "is the universal national practice." With this string of negatives, is it any wonder, Youth's Companion opined in 1873, that people "think of the stupidest and most repulsive European as a brother," but not "the almond-eyed Chinese"? As the article continued, "while all other immigrants come to America to make a new home, the Chinese only come to make money, and then go back to China." The consequence? "Europeans become Americans; Chinese never do." Still Youth's Companion cautioned children to be understanding of the Chinese. "It is not their fault," after all, "that they were born in China...."⁶⁰

Such admonitions ring hollow against the backdrop of anti-Chinese epithets and demeaning descriptions. Youth's Companion's "An American Boy in China" (1879), for example, attempts an even-handed portrayal but focuses heavily on the "Horrible Punishments" the Chinese mete out to criminals. J.O. Davidson, author of boys' adventure stories, also emphasized their debased character. Many of the "yellow, narrow-eyed, doll-faced Chinamen," Davidson wrote in Harper's Young People (1880), were nothing but the "most expert thieves."⁶¹

For more than a generation American children had learned in school of the cruelties and barbarities of the Chinese people. In the middle part of the nineteenth

century, Samuel G. Goodrich, author of countless children's books and school texts (and who often wrote under the pen name Peter Parley), helped instill the standard anti-Chinese image in the nation's young. "The Chinese are a peculiar people," he wrote in 1840 in The Child's Second Book of History, including the Modern History of Europe, Africa, and Asia, a text that went through dozens of editions and reprintings, "differing from those of any other country.... It is now agreed that a people is seldom to be found, more deficient in honor and feeling, or more entirely false and deceitful." The Chinese government, Goodrich explained, "is despotic in the extreme." No government in the world, he added, "is more corrupt and oppressive." He highlighted Chinese infanticide and child mutilation. Their religion was nothing but "a confused mixture of superstitions." Goodrich also included an illustration of a Chinese man selling rats, one of the earliest references to such activities. [See figure 3.9] Forty years later, Goodrich's message of Chinese barbarity was still embedded in children's literature. In 1876 Youth's Companion described the dominant characteristics of "most of the Asiatic races." These races, the prestigious juvenile weekly emanating from Boston stated, "are apt to be indolent, improvident, greedy, intemperate, servile, cruel, vain, inquisitive, superstitious and cowardly...."⁶²



Chinese selling rats.

Figure 3.9. This illustration was among the earliest depicting a Chinese man selling rats for consumption.

Source: Samuel G. Goodrich, The Child's Second Book of History, Including the Modern History of Europe, Africa, and Asia. Illustrated by Engravings and Sixteen Maps, and Designed as a Sequel to the "First Book of History,["] by the Author of Peter Parley's Tales, (Boston: Hendee, Jenks, and Palmer, 1840).

The image of the Chinese in children's literature varied little from the one depicted in adult popular culture. Children received substantially the same message as their parents. Juvenile publications tended to have a more obviously Christian slant, with moralizing lessons and missionary intents foremost in their stories. They presented two basic characters: the unenlightened little pagan and the comical Mandarin imp. The dominant theme that came across, however, regardless of the particular stereotype invoked, was the image of strangeness. The Chinese were queer, peculiar, curious. They were odd, they were different, they were bizarre, they were weird. They were a people apart from Americans, an apartness repeatedly emphasized. If American children picked up anything from the stories they read and the pictures they saw it was that the Chinese, whether good or bad, were not like them. They ate rats, smelled queer, and dripped wax on chickens. Children growing up in the late 1800s were surrounded by these racist icons yet children were not urged to vilify them. Children's literature was no more breeding a future army of anti-Chinese voters than adult popular culture was preaching vigilante action and immigration restriction.

Conclusion

The image of the Chinese in popular culture in the United States east of the Rocky Mountains during the era of exclusion was ubiquitous and pervasive. No American, literate or not, could have escaped its presence. Grinning, bobbing, and acting like an animal, the Chinese immigrant appeared in every medium the nation had to offer. In the dime novel he was a sidekick, a servant, an irritating nuisance. Or he was a gambler, a miner, a money-hungry outsider. He could also be a fighter, a defender of right, and even a hero. On stage the Chinese played similar roles but usually demeaning ones. He was another funny newcomer on the American scene, and, like the freed black and the Irish immigrant, he was jockeying for position with other oppressed groups. The middle class lumped him with the rest of the underclass, while the underclass--the working classes, new immigrants, and non-Anglo-Saxon groups--saw him as an intruder but also as an individual. To all he was shrewd and cunning, childlike and innocent. He was exotic and different, occasionally fierce--but the threat he posed to American society remained largely unexpressed.

When Edith arrives in Denver with her Chinese servant in the opening chapter of Little Ah Sin, Jack is puzzled:

"I can understand a lap-dog, or a parrot, or even a monkey [Jack said]; but what use you can have for a pet pagan surpasses my comprehension."

"Oh! he is no end of fun!" laughed Edith. "And please to remember that he is not a pet animal, but a human being."

"I suppose so. But what do you do with him?"⁶³
What indeed were Americans to do with these people, these "pet pagans"? The answer ultimately provided by popular culture is ambiguous. Despite the racism and stereotypes freely invoked during the late nineteenth century, the multitudinous organs of popular culture scarcely ever promoted or suggested outright exclusion. The familiar negative image was frequently offset by positive, ennobling, and sympathetic portrayals. There were studies in evil, studies in good; in dime novels, anti-Chinese characters were almost uniformly bad, those who mistreated the Chinese were meant to be loathed. Exclusion, in itself, simply did not sell.

What effect did any of these images have on American society? Gauging the impact of popular culture is tricky at best. Interpreting what people read does not tell us what they thought; interpreting what they saw does not tell us what they took in. Popular culture, however, is a valuable source for understanding the social climate of a specific era, and for surveying the images and icons that surrounded and inundated the overwhelming majority of Americans. This fusillade of Chinese images had proportionately a much stronger impact on Americans in the Northeast and Midwest than did images of other ethnic groups, such as blacks or Irish. These latter groups surely received their share of abuse. But the key difference was that blacks and Irish

(and one could later add Jews, Italians, and many others as well) had settled all over the country. By 1880 there were more than 600,000 blacks in the Northeast and Midwest. The Irish were even more numerous.⁶⁴ These groups had a fixed presence throughout the United States. Other Americans, therefore, could see them, interact with them, and have contact with them on a frequent or occasional basis. They could contrast the stereotypes presented in popular culture with the reality they encountered in their communities or in local travels. Such encounters gave Americans the opportunity to reject, to accept, or to modify various black, Irish, or other stereotypes.

This was not the case with the Chinese. The number of Chinese immigrants in the Northeast and Midwest in 1870 was a scant 168 (and almost half of them were living in the single town of North Adams). By 1880 this number had climbed to just 2,200, a mere handful in a region whose population exceeded 32 million. Most of these Chinese in the East, moreover, were clustered in burgeoning Chinatowns in New York City and Boston. (New York State alone had 900 Chinese residents, almost half the Northeastern and Midwestern total.)⁶⁵ It is thus safe to say that the vast majority of Americans east of the Rocky Mountains had never met or even seen a Chinese immigrant, except, perhaps, for the occasional Chinese giants and dwarfs exhibited in American museums and circuses.⁶⁶ Popular culture and the

media thus carried an influence in forging an ethnic stereotype with such a power that it could wield for no other group. Lacking direct, face-to-face contact with the Chinese, most Americans had to rely on popular culture and the media to provide them with information. Without personal experiences to counter the common stereotypes, Americans had little first-hand evidence from which to judge the Chinese. That Americans--basically ignorant of the Chinese--ultimately accepted the total exclusion of Chinese immigrants from the United States may be one of the earliest and most persuasive indicators of the influence of politicians and the power of the press in news and editorials to shape public opinion and national policy.

The evidence indicates that popular culture neither created nor reflected a popular spirit of anti-Chinese hatred. Popular culture did not lead the country toward Chinese exclusion. The considerable variety of images, both pro and con, reinforced numerous stereotypes but negated any tendency toward extreme action. No unified or monolithic outlook ever emerged; prejudice and tolerance existed side by side. Popular culture helped to both create and to counter the atmosphere of anti-Chinese racism.

Popular culture supplied a steady backdrop, a hodge-podge from which people could grab images and icons. And grab both sides did. In this respect, popular culture

provided valuable ammunition for opponents and advocates of exclusion, but was never a motive force. That motive force lay elsewhere. It lay with scores of politicians and editors eager to manipulate images and threats for personal gain. It lay with a political system that enabled powerful individuals to inflate side-issues that masked real problems stemming from complex, industrial conflicts. Hordes of Chinese were not coming to America, nor had they ever been. But to individuals wrenched by massive economic changes, and to those who feared disruptive actions from such groups, the emotional appeal of Chinese exclusion was enormous and simple. It offered an easy solution without hurting any constituency.

Politicians sought voters and voters responded. Popular culture responded as well. The 1890s--the decade following the first era of Chinese exclusion--gave birth to the insidious phrase "yellow peril" and the demeaning term "chink." These epithets, which appeared in none of the sources cited in this and the preceding chapter, would soon become commonplace and remain powerful terms throughout the 1900s. By the turn of the century, racism, prejudice, and anti-Chinese hatred, now justified by national law, had become well-entrenched in American society and in popular culture. But during the 1870s and 1880s, while the nation was still debating its first immigration restriction laws and senators and representatives first uttering their

vicious anti-Chinese diatribes, popular culture offered an alternative: Along with pictures of evil and sub-human Chinese came words of respect, of praise, even of greeting. "We have room enough for you,/And we've work enough to do,/" the song "John Chinaman," proclaimed, "And our nation's song of welcome now we sing."⁶⁷ Exclusion was not inevitable. In the post-Civil War decades the issue was open, it was still up for grabs, and this openness was reflected in popular culture. It took the motives and actions of politicians to seize the issue, exploit its potential, and rally interest groups to close the gates of America on an entire race of newcomers. Together these political forces would turn the United States on a course of active hostility toward Chinese immigrants and other ethnic groups, a course that would continually keep finding new targets, and a course that would endure for generations.

The descent on North Adams in 1870 had galvanized the first wave of anti-Chinese protest in the East. As we have seen, workers had a clear agenda and specific needs that led them to make a vital distinction between immigration and importation. Politicians, however, had a different agenda and different needs. They needed votes, they needed issues. To them, the Chinese represented a means to an end, and during the 1870s, they would attempt to turn Chinese immigration into a major political issue. As the following

chapters will show, their initial attempts fell flat; not until the end of the decade, when class lines had hardened and class war become a genuine possibility, would politicians succeed in riveting the nation's attention on Chinese immigration. In so doing they consciously dismissed the positive and uplifting images offered by popular culture and chose only the worst. They then distorted these negative images and magnified them to a level never before seen in American history. Understanding the image of the Chinese portrayed in popular culture is essential to understanding the process of Chinese exclusion. But to understand the force behind Chinese exclusion we must turn away from the printed words and pictures of dime novelists and playwrights and fix our gaze on Washington.

NOTES

1. Edward L. Wheeler, Sunflower Sam of Shasta; or, Deadwood Dick Jr.'s Full Hand. A Tale of You Bet, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (XVIII:453), March 30, 1886, pp. 3, 11-14.
2. Ibid., p. 12.
3. Michael Denning, Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America (New York: Verso, 1987), chapters 7, 8.
4. Atwell Whitney, Almond-Eyed: The Great Agitator, A Story of the Day (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft, 1878; Pierton W. Dooner, Last Days of the Republic (San Francisco: Alta California Publishing House, 1880); Robert Wolter, A Short and Truthful History of California and Oregon by the Chinese in the Year A.D. 1899 (San Francisco: A.L. Bancroft, 1882).
5. William Wu, The Yellow Peril: Chinese Americans in American Fiction, 1850-1940 (Hamden, Ct.: Archon Books, 1982, chapter 2. The quotes are from p. 40.
6. See Stuart Creighton Miller, The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1785-1882 (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California, 1969), esp. pp. 62-63, 76, 168-71, 180-86, 242 n106.
7. Wheeler, "A No. 1," The Dashing Toll-Taker (1883), pp. 7, 9-10.
8. Wheeler, Apollo Bill, The Trail Tornado (1882), pp. 3, 10; Wheeler, Corduroy Charlie, the Boy Bravo (1879), p. 4; Edward L. Wheeler, Kangaroo Kit; or, The Mysterious Miner, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (XIII:334), Dec. 18, 1883, p. 6.
9. Crowley, Crawford's Claim (1890), p. 29; McCloskey, "Across the Continent," p. 107; Hanshew, The Forty-Niners (1879), p. 17; Moore, Poverty Flats (1899), pp. 10-11, 29, 35.
10. Campbell, "My Partner," p. 303; Powell, Conn (1885), p. 27; Henry L. Williams, Wax Works at Play (Chicago: Denison, 1894), p. 12.
11. Press Eldridge, "An Eccentric Old Maid," in Cool Burgess' I'll Be Gay Songster. Containing a fine collection of this great artist's best songs, as sung by him in all the

principal theatres of the United States and Canada (New York: Popular Publishing, 1880[?]), p. 23.

12. Hanshew, The Forty-Niners (1879), p. 17.

13. Warne, Jack Sand the Boss of the Town (1885), p. 3; William F. Cody, "Gold Bullet Sport; or, The Knights of the Overland," The Star Journal (New York: Beadle and Adams), April 12, 1879, p. 2; Pad, "The Shortys Married and Settled Down" (1882), pp. 26-28; Wheeler, Denver Doll, the Detective Queen (1882), p. 5.

For examples of the Chinese being called "yellow niggers," see Dumont, Wide-A-Wake, the Robber King (1879), p. 5; Dumont, Blue Blazes (1880), p. 9; Burr, Velvet Face, the Border Bravo (1881), p. 9; Wheeler, Apollo Bill, the Trail Tornado (1882), p. 4. One character also referred to a Chinese as "'a yaller coon.'" (Aiken, Chin Chin the Chinese Detective (1885), p. 21.)

14. See, for example, Aiken, Chin Chin the Chinese Detective (1885); Eyster, A Sport in Spectacles (1884); Cowdrick, Fighting Harry, The Chief of Chained Cyclone (1889); Eyster, Seven Shot Steve, The Sharp With a Smile (1889).

15. Appleton, Centennial Movement (1877); Williams, Wax Works at Play (1894), p. 6; Baker, Nevada (1882), p. 40.

16. Pad, "The Shortys' Trip Around the World" (1881), pp. 22-25; Pad, "Tommy Bounce, Jr." (1882), pp. 26-27, 35.

17. Major E.L. St. Vrain, Kingbolt Chris, the Young Hardshell Detective; or, The Solid Man From Slow Coach, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (XV:371), Sept. 2, 1884, pp. 1, 10, 15.

18. Wheeler, "A No. 1," The Dashing Toll-Taker (1883), p. 5; Edward L. Wheeler, "Sierra Sam," the Frontier Ferret; or, A Sister's Devotion, Beadle's Half-Dime Library (X:244), March 28, 1882, p. 8; "My Room-Mate in 1890," McGee's Illustrated Weekly (I:25), May 12, 1877, p. 394; Wheeler, Corduroy Charlie, the Boy Bravo (1879), pp. 4, 5.

19. Aiken, Red Richard Man from Red Dog (1885); Wheeler, Corduroy Charlie, the Boy Bravo (1879), esp. pp. 4, 14; Crook quoted in Chicago Times, Oct. 11, 1879, p. 4; "Topics of the Day," in Murphy and Mack's McMullen Family Songster (New York: Fisher, 1879), p. 24.

For Chinese dislike of Indians, see brief mention in McCloskey, "Across the Continent," p. 110.

20. Mary Roberts Coolidge, Chinese Immigration (New York: Henry Holt, 1909).
21. Wu, Chinese Americans in American Fiction, p. 31.
22. Den Morton, "Mulcahey's Cousin Dan," in Pat Rooney's Clarabel Magee Songster (New York: Fisher, 1882), p. 5; John E. Murphy, "President McMullen," in Murphy and Mack's Rafferty Blues Songster (New York: Fisher, 1880[?]), p. 20. This song, the editor noted, was sung "with great success at the London Theatre" in New York City. It was also published in Murphy and Mack's McMullen Family Songster (1879); "John Chinaman," in The "First She Would and Then She Wouldn't" Songster (New York: De Witt, 1873), p. 43; George Cooper, "The Cup o' Tay," in The Gay Young Clerk Songster. Comprising the Latest Copyright Songs, Comic and Sentimental (New York: Beadle and Adams, 1870), p. 61.
23. Nettie H. Pelham, The Old Fashioned Husking Bee, An Old Folks' Entertainment in One Scene (Boston: Walter H. Baker, 1891), p. 11; Hanshew (1879), The Forty-Niners (1879), p. 16; Mary B. Horne, The Last of the Peak Sisters: or, The Great Moral Dime Show. An Entertainment in One Scene (Boston: Walter H. Baker, 1892), p. 15; Townsend, The Golden Gulch (1893), p. 32.
- For scenes with Irish anti-Chinese characters, see, for example, Moore, Poverty Flats (1899), p. 14; Hunt, The Lost Dog (1890s[?]), p. 8; Powell, Conn (1885); and Baker, New Brooms Sweep Clean (1870).
24. Cowley, Crawford's Claim (1890), pp. 22-23, 30; Moore, Poverty Flats (1899), pp. 16, 28.
25. Dumont, Wide-A-Wake, the Robber King (1879). The quotes are from p. 5.
26. Cowdrick, Fighting Harry, The Chief of Chained Cyclone (1889). The quotes are from p. 9. Wah Tom turns out to be a white woman in disguise and biological mother of the O'Mara's adopted daughter. These reversals, however, are irrelevant to the O'Mara's attitudes and actions.
27. Cowdrick, Broadway Billy Abroad (1890), See, especially, pp. 7, 8-10, 12-13.
28. See Denning, Mechanic Accents, chapter 4.
29. Ibid.

30. A notable exception appears in Frank Dumont's Wide-Awake, the Robber King (p. 8)--the same dime novel with the Irish immigrant.
31. T.S. Denison, Patsy O'Wang. An Irish Farce with a Chinese Mix-Up (Chicago: Denison, 1895).
32. Ibid., pp. 7-8.
33. Ibid., pp. 7, 9.
34. Ibid., pp. 2, 6.
35. Ibid., pp. 8, 9, 12-14, 16. "The Chinese dialect," the playwright admitted, "as written here (and elsewhere in America) is at best but a poor imitation, but good enough to be funny, which is the only object in view." (Ibid., p. 3.)
36. Ibid., pp. 16-17.
37. Ibid., pp. 16, 20, 25, 27.
38. Ibid., pp. 28-29.
39. Ibid., p. 26.
40. "Etchings: Miss Malony on the Chinese Question," Scribner's Monthly, Nov. 1870, pp. 350-51. See also Miller, The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1750-1882, p. 241 84n.
41. Winner (1871), "The Coolie Chinee," pp. 150-52; Margaret Hosmer, "Mary Ann and Chyng Loo," Lippincott's Magazine, Oct. 1870, pp. 354-61.
42. Jennie Woodville, "Chang-how and Anarky," Lippincott's Magazine, July 1878, pp. 114-18.
43. Miller, The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1750-1882, p. 241 84n; Frank D.Y. Carpenter, "Wash Lo," Lippincott's Magazine, April 1881, pp. 404-08; Margaret Hosmer, "The Childlike and Bland Chinee," Potter's American Monthly, July 1878, pp. 352-57.
44. Prentice Mulford, "Glimpses of John Chinaman," Lippincott's Magazine, Feb. 1873, pp. 219-25; Mark Twain, "Goldsmith's Friend Abroad Again," Galaxy, Oct. 1870, pp. 569-71, Nov. 1870, pp. 727-731, Jan. 1871, pp. 156-58. For another jab at the Irish, see Mark Twain, "John Chinaman in New York," Galaxy, Sept. 1870, p. 426.

45. Thomas Bailey Aldrich, The Stillwater Tragedy, in Works of Thomas Bailey Aldrich, VI (Boston and New York: Jefferson, 1908; first published 1880), pp. 182-85.

46. For an exception, see T. Fulton Gantt, Breaking the Chains: A Story of the Present Industrial Struggle, originally published in 1887 in The Lance, a Salem, Oregon labor newspaper, and republished in Mary C. Grimes, ed., The Knights in Fiction: Two Labor Novels of the 1880s (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois, 1986), pp. 27-133. This novel included a highly unflattering portrait of Li Hung, a Chinese valet, who debauches and seduces a wealthy man's wife. Several references are also made to the evil of imported contract labor, but the thrust is aimed more at Europe than at China. It is interesting that Gantt lived his entire life in the East and Midwest but submitted his novel to a West Coast newspaper. (See Grimes, The Knights in Fiction, pp. 15-17, 37, 47-48, 51-51, 101, 105, 108, 132-33.)

47. Puck (III:62), May 15, 1878.

48. Mulford, "Glimpses of John Chinaman" (1873), pp. 224, 220; Woodville, "Chang-how and Anarky" (1878), p. 114; Hosmer, "The Childlike and Bland Chinese" (1878), pp. 354-57; Carpenter, "Wash Lo" (1881), pp. 405, 406; Aldrich The Stillwater Tragedy (1880), p. 141; Hosmer, "Mary Ann and Chyng Loo" (1870), p. 354.

For examples of animal comparisons, see: Carpenter, "Wash Lo" (1881), pp. 404, 407; Woodville, "Chang-how and Anarky" (1878), p. 117; Mulford, "Glimpses of John Chinaman" (1873), p. 223; and Hosmer, "The Childlike and Bland Chinese" (1878), p. 405.

49. "A True Story," Youth's Companion, Sept. 18, 1879, pp. 309-10; William Eliot Griffis, "Fun In a Chinese School Room," Harper's Young People, May 4, 1880, p. 372; Louis C. Elson, "A Strange Music," St. Nicholas, Jan. 1880, pp. 246-83; Mrs. S.C. Wingate, "A Chinaman's Queue," Wide Awake, 1876, pp. 120-21; "The Chinese Queue," Youth's Companion, Sept. 16, 1880, p. 313; "A High-Toned Merchant," Youth's Companion, Feb. 26, 1880, p. 69; St. Nicholas, Oct. 1880, p. 997; St. Nicholas, Feb. 1881, pp. 330-31.

50. Clara G. Dolliver, "Miss Juniper's Ward," Wide Awake, Sept. 1878, pp. 154-59. The quotes are from pp. 156, 159.

51. Ibid., pp. 155, 156, 158, 159.

52. Mrs. Nellie Eyster, "Tong Sing Kow," Wide Awake, Dec. 1876, pp. 350-55.

53. J.T. Trowbridge, "Chin Fee," Youth's Companion, May 13, 1880, pp. 165-66.

54. "An American Boy in China," Youth's Companion, Nov. 13, 1879, pp. 399-400; Amanda B. Harris, "A Visit to the Chinese in Boston," Youth's Companion, April 8, 1880, p. 121; Amanda B. Harris, "A Chinese Mission School," Wide Awake, Feb. 1880, pp. 81-87; Hjalmar Hjorth Boyesen, "Hans Christian Andersen," St. Nicholas, Dec. 1875, p. 65; J.O. Davidson, "Across the Ocean; or, A Boy's First Voyage," Harper's Young People, May 25, 1880, p. 413, May 18, 1880, p. 394, June 1, 1880, pp. 428-29.

55. J.L., "A Curious Monastery," St. Nicholas, Oct. 1879, p. 833; "Oaths," Youth's Companion, Jan. 16, 1879, p. 20; A.B.H. [Amanda B. Harris], "A Chinese Lady's Pet," Youth's Companion, Jan. 30, 1879, p. 39.

56. "Chopsticks," The Children's Hour, Feb. 1871, p. 66; Harris, "A Visit to the Chinese in Boston" (1880), p. 121; Harris, "A Chinese Lady's Pet" (1879), p. 39; Harriet M. Miller, "Little Travelers," St. Nicholas, Jan. 1877, p. 181. For a brief article on how bird nest soup is made, see St. Nicholas, Jan. 1878, pp. 234-35.

57. "Queer People," St. Nicholas, April 1876, pp. 380-81; Mrs. M.E. Blake, "The Tragical History of Chang Fung Loo," Wide Awake, Nov. 1879, pp. 304-07; Mrs. Lizzie W. Champney, "That Small Piece Boy From China," Harper's Young People, Jan. 4, 1881, p. 157.

58. "Pinafore Rhymes," Harper's Young People, April 12, 1881, p. 381; R.K. Munkittrick, "The Mandarin and His Rat," Harper's Young People, Sept. 21, 1880, p. 693; J.K. Nutting, "Johnny Skye Skating and What Came of This," Wide Awake, March 1879, pp. 180-83. The quote is from p. 181.

59. Palmer Cox, "The Funny Mandarin," St. Nicholas, Dec. 1879, pp. 172-73 (see also his "A Chinese Adventure," Harper's Young People, May 17, 1881, p. 461); Louisa May Alcott, "Under the Lilacs," St. Nicholas, Sept. 1878, p. 717; Harper's Young People, March 2, 1880, p. 232; S.K.B., "Chinese Decoration for Easter Eggs," Wide Awake, April 1882, p. 250; "The Funny Chinaman," Philadelphia Times, reprinted in Youth's Companion, Feb. 13, 1879, p. 54; Fannie Roper Feudge, "How I Kept the Chinese New-Year," St. Nicholas, Feb. 1876, pp. 225-27; Youth's Companion, June 15, 1876, p. 194; Katharine D. Smith, "Half a Dozen Housekeepers," St. Nicholas, Nov. 1878, p. 51. The quotes are from C.D. Clark, "Caspar Deane and the 'Cinnamon,'" St. Nicholas, April 1877, pp. 382-84.

On being called "heathen," see, for example, Youth's Companion, Sept. 19, 1878, p. 304, Oct. 3, 1878, p. 322; introduction to "The Funny Chinaman," Youth's Companion, Feb. 13, 1879, p. 54; "An Electioneering Trick," Youth's Companion, Nov. 4, 1880, p. 393; and Palmer Cox, "A Chinese Adventure" (1881), p. 461. On smiling, see, for example, W.A. Birch, "The Tale of Schneider," St. Nicholas, April 1882, pp. 432-33; Addie Hayes, "What We Saw on Our Journey," Student and Schoolmate, Nov. 1870, pp. 516-19; F.S. Saltus, "China," Youth's Companion, Jan. 16, 1879, p. 22.

60. "An American Boy in China," Youth's Companion, Nov. 13, 1879, pp. 399-400; Harper's Young People, May 25, 1880; "Towed By Rail," St. Nicholas, Nov. 1878, p. 10; J.O. Davidson, "Across the Ocean; or, A Boy's First Voyage," Harper's Young People, May 18, 1880, p. 394; Charles Dudley Warner, "What Shall He Do With Her?" St. Nicholas, Jan. 1879, p. 156; E.C.J., "Sewing Silk," Student and Schoolmate, Nov. 1870, pp. 521-24; "A Trip to China," Youth's Companion, Nov. 2, 1871, p. 356; Harris, "A Chinese Mission School" (1881), (see also "An American Boy in China" (1879)); "Immigration," Youth's Companion, July 31, 1873, p. 244.

In an article on the Japanese, William Elliot Griffis also notes the Chinese aversion to assimilation: "... once here [in the United States] the Japanese always prefer to dress like Americans, in which they differ again from their old neighbors the Chinese, who persist in wearing their native costumes wherever they go." (Griffis, "Blossom-boy of Tokio," St. Nicholas, July 1879, pp. 588-96.)

On Chinese backwardness, their aversion to modern technology, and their belief in witchcraft--all mentioned merely in passing--see "Towed By Rail," St. Nicholas, Nov. 1878, p. 8.

61. "An American Boy in China" (1879); Davidson, "Across the Ocean" (1880), p. 394.

62. Samuel G. Goodrich, The Child's Second Book of History, including the Modern History of Europe, Africa, and Asia. Illustrated By Engravings and Sixteen Maps, and Designed as a Sequel to the "First Book of History, ["] by the Author of Peter Parley's Tales (Boston: Hendee, Jenks, and Palmer, 1840, 35th ed.; first published 1832), pp. 164-67. The quotes are from pp. 164, 165. "Life in the Grand Royal Palace of Siam," Youth's Companion, Aug. 24, 1876, p. 275.

63. Warne, Little Ah Sin (1885), p. 2.

64. Statistics of the United States at the Tenth Census (June 1, 1880), Embracing Extended Tables of the Population of States, Counties, and Minor Civil Divisions, with Distinctions of Race, Sex, Age, Nativity, and Occupations; Together with Summary Tables, Derived from Other Census Reports, Relating to Newspapers and Periodicals; Public Schools and Illiteracy; The Dependent, Defective, and Delinquent Classes, Etc., I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1883), pp. 3, 494. On the geographic breakdown of regions, see chapter 1 5n.

65. Ibid., p. 3; The Statistics of the Population of the United States, Embracing the Tables of Race, Nationality, Sex, and Selected Occupations. To Which Are Added the Statistics of School Attendance and Illiteracy, of Schools, Libraries, Newspapers and Periodicals, Churches; Pauperism and Crime, and of Areas, Families, and Dwellings. Compiled from the Original Returns of the Ninth Census, (June 1, 1870,) under the Direction of the Secretary of the Interior, by Francis A. Walker, Superintendent of Census, Vol. I (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1872), pp. xvii.

66. George C.D. O'Dell, Annals of the New York Stage, XI (New York: Columbia, 1939), pp. 359, 364-65, 401, 419, 624.

67. "John Chinaman," in Girls, Don't Fool with Cupid, Songster. Contains New and Popular Songs Sung by Billy Emerson, Master Birney, Charles Vivian, Frank Howard, Frank Wilder, Lydia Thompson, Mdlle. Christine Nilsson, Miss Annie Louise Cary, and Other Celebrities (New York: Beadle and Adams, 1871), p. 39.

CHAPTER 4

"ALL SORTS OF TRICKS":

DEFINING IMPORTATION, 1871-1875

"We will take another view of the question, not doubting the least that the Chinese have a perfect right, as well as any other foreigners, to migrate to this country if they wish to better their condition. But John Chinaman as an individual, and John Chinaman in gangs, bought and sold by greedy speculators, to break down the price of American labor, are quite different articles."

--Samuel Mason, 1873

When delegates to the Iron Molders' International Union met in Philadelphia in July 1870 and passed resolutions to be forwarded to the U.S. Senate condemning the importation of "contract labor" and "Chinese serfs" while "extend[ing] a hand of welcome to the emigrant of every clime," they could have asked any senator in the Capitol to present their memorial. They could have asked the prominent advocates of Chinese exclusion George H. Williams [R-OR] or Eugene Casserly [D-CA]. Or, they could have asked one of the senators from Ohio, the state where the I.M.I.U. had its executive headquarters. These would have been John Sherman [R] who had recently expressed caution regarding Chinese immigration, or Allan G. Thurman [D] who favored immigration but opposed importation. They could also have asked any of the forty senators from the twenty different states

represented at the I.M.I.U. convention. Instead, iron molders chose the senator most closely identified with a pro-immigration/anti-importation stance: William M. Stewart of Nevada. Union officials forwarded their memorial to the Western senator several months after their convention, and on December 12, 1870, the opening day of the last session of the 41st Congress, Stewart presented it to the Senate. Stewart also reintroduced his anti-importation bill that had never come to a vote in the preceding session.¹

The next day, Representative James A. Johnson [D-CA] urged abrogating part of the Burlingame Treaty so as to permit Congress to prohibit Chinese immigration. As Johnson's colleague William Mungen [D-OH] said a few weeks later: "the [Chinese] question is up in our broad land, and, like Banquo's ghost, will not be 'laid.'" The question, Mungen continued,

is one which will come to you at your homes, your thresholds, and your firesides; it will permeate every form of active industry; it must be met, squarely met; it is before the country; it has loomed up suddenly with such abrupt prominence that politicians are startled, at least many of those who have the perception to see anything of its importance.²

Mungen was right, but only in part. With the arrival of seventy-five "coolie" strikebreakers in North Adams the previous summer, the Chinese question had indeed "loomed up suddenly." But the Ohio Democrat exaggerated the prominence of the issue for the immediate future. The years 1871 to 1875 represented an "incubation period" for the Chinese

issue on a national level. While the issues of Chinese immigration and importation never quite disappeared, they receded from public view. After the recent storm of attention this may seem surprising, but the reasons are fairly simple. As demonstrated during the summer of 1870, the working classes had no objection to immigration. What they opposed was importation, and while their protests may have fallen on deaf ears in Washington they reverberated loudly among manufacturers across the country. Chinese laborers would never again be imported to New England to break a strike. And over the next five years they would be imported only a tiny handful of times to any place east of the Rocky Mountains. Importing laborers from China was a daunting task, even with the assistance of an agent like Koopmanschap. Importation was extremely expensive, beyond the means of most employers.

Cost indeed remained a crucial factor deterring manufacturers, but this alone cannot explain the reluctance of capitalists to import Chinese immigrants. Employers, after all, could have easily mimicked Sampson and imported Chinese directly from California at a nominal price. But they didn't. Some no doubt held the same racial views as other Americans, and simply opposed the presence of Chinese immigrants in their factory or town. Most, however, feared reprisals from their work force. Unsure what skills imported Chinese immigrants possessed and not yet accustomed

to recent mechanization of their industries, employers were not confident that the Chinese could take over skilled trades quickly. Hence, most employers could not risk alienating, provoking, and losing large numbers of their employees. Importation would make them satan-like, Sampson-like pariahs--a status few manufacturers could afford. The widespread working-class protest rallies of the previous summer thus proved an enormous success: while they had no effect on legislation, they had a decisive impact on the actions of employers. Fear of working-class retaliation kept most employers from resorting to imported labor. Workers had made their point. And with the crisis passed workers no longer needed to speak in the apocalyptic tones of the previous summer. The Chinese issue remained on the working-class agenda but not at the top. Yet if workers lowered the volume on their protests over the next several years they did not change their tune. They would continue to oppose importation while at the same time welcome voluntary immigration "from every clime."

If workers east of the Rockies would not keep the Chinese issue in the national spotlight, who would-- Californians and fellow Westerners? The West Coast, home to 95% of the nation's Chinese population, certainly tried. The California Democratic party urged Chinese exclusion in the late 1860s and the Republicans followed suit in 1871.³ But on a national level this hardly mattered. Located some

3,000 miles from the nation's main centers of power, California had scant impact on national legislation. Its meager population of 582,000 ranked it among the smallest states in the country. With an overwhelming Republican majority in Congress and Grant a good bet for reelection in 1872, California's three House seats and five votes in the electoral college (out of 352) seemed paltry indeed. National politicians had little incentive to concern themselves with California--or Chinese immigration--in the early 1870s. Furthermore, while California's two senators consistently pushed for exclusion during the first half of the decade, the senators from neighboring Nevada urged open immigration. This split presented a mixed picture to the rest of the country. Chinese immigration thus remained an issue without a national constituency in the early 1870s, and without a constituency it had few spokesmen.

This did not mean there was silence. On January 7, 1871, Representative Mungen of Ohio tried to lull his colleagues out of their complacency and impress upon them the dangers of Chinese immigration. The Chinese, he said, are "a poor, miserable, dwarfish race of inferior beings...." In a lengthy speech, Mungen seized on all the negative images popular culture had to offer:

The Chinese never were warriors, but always were murderers and robbers. A low cunning and a base treachery mark their character; and cruelty ... stamps their depraved nature. A disregard for truth is no disgrace among Chinamen; it is a part of their nature to lie, and theft is in-born....

Almost universally he is a gambler; he is a polygamist; he dissipates by opium-smoking; and from high to low he indulges in the most bestial immorality; he is litigious; versed by natural aptitude and practice in chicanery, and prone to and fitted for every kind of craft and intrigue. The most astute and casuistic of our lawyers is no match in quirks and quibbles for even a comparatively illiterate Chinese....

As a people they were "docile, obedient ... and imitative," "effeminate, pedantic, and ... cowardly." As a race they were simply "fossilized, ... stagnating ... in a state of semi-civilization." They practiced infanticide, human sacrifice, and lacked all sense of morality. Although the Chinese individual revered his ancestors, he "is cruel to his offspring" and "sells his daughters to prostitution." Their treatment of women, Mungen said, was "most barbarous." A Chinese woman was either a "toy" or a "drudge," never a "help-mate." And for crimes committed by fathers, brothers, or husbands, Chinese women "are slowly cut up piecemeal, with knives."⁴

Mungen would not let up. The Chinese, he said, did everything backwards. Despite the nation's thousands of years of existence the Chinese individual had developed no

sense of the beautiful. In art, in literature, in everything, he seems to admire only the grotesque, the disproportioned, the hideous. When he attempts to be profound he is childish; when he tries to be solemn and impressive he is ludicrous.

Most incredible, Mungen said, or perhaps most insulting, the Chinese considered themselves better than other people. They viewed Caucasians as "an inferior race of odious, miserable, and ridiculous barbarians." Mungen accused them

of possessing "undying prejudices." Worst of all was the Chinese religion. They had no religion, he said, only "superstitions." They prayed to gigantic statues with four heads and fifty arms. Different classes prayed to different gods, but even the most eminent Chinese practiced "hideous heathenisms" and "monstrous idolatries." Their wise men and religious leaders were nothing but "mere atheists," he said, who questioned the existence of an afterlife. All this was too much. "In a Christian country," Mungen asked,

in the nineteenth century of the Christian era, where the Christian religion has been fostered and cherished and respected, must the shrines before which our ancestors ... bowed and worshiped the true God be overturned to give place to the Chinese pagoda and the Chinese idols?

No, he stated, America must give no shelter to a race so foreign, so different, so dangerous. "Our people," he concluded, "are not rat-eating, snake-eating, cat-eating, pup-eating, rice-eating lazzaroni."⁵

Exclusion was the only way to protect American workers from this "labor-crushing flood of Chinese and coolies." No American could compete with laborers who would work for pennies a day. "Let us look at this a moment," Mungen said.

We have capitalists with all the means necessary to utilize Chinese labor, and they will invest their means, because it will be profitable for the capitalists to supersede white labor by Chinese labor; to turn the white laboring man or woman out of employment and install John Chinaman in his place, just as Mr. Sampson, of North Adams, Massachusetts, did; just as the Central Pacific Railroad Company did; just as the Alabama and Chattanooga Railroad Company has done; just as numerous corporations and capitalists

have done, and as thousands of others are preparing to do.

It wouldn't take much, he said. "Capital, large capital, is the requisite for obtaining and retaining cheap and reliable Chinese labor." Mungen then presented a possible scenario. Suppose the nation's three richest men (he named A.T. Stewart, William B. Astor, and Cornelius Vanderbilt) each decided to import a million Chinese workers over the next three years to raise livestock and cultivate crops.

They could do this work cheaper with Chinese labor than our farmers can possibly do it. They could undersell and, with the vast number of laborers, they could and would regulate the market, and would literally force our farmers to come to their terms or quit their business. The same is true if they invested in manufacturing; they could control everything. [emphasis mine]

Is this the type of nation Americans wanted? A nation dominated by capital, in the grip of "shoddyites and monopolists with their thousands and tens of thousands of Chinese" at their beck and call? China overflowed with people. "There is enough of them," Mungen warned, "to drive all working-men from every avocation, reducing them to beggary and starvation, and in thousands and tens of thousands of cases there would be no alternative; starvation would be inevitable, and death would close the scene."⁶

It was a grisly, gruesome picture Mungen painted. He drew this picture not just for his colleagues in the House but for the working classes across the nation.

Already capital and labor, whose interests, well understood, should move hand in hand, are distrustful

of each other. And this Chinese immigration and importation, unless you take order, I warn you now ... will beget a fatal war between labor and capital.

Politicians had failed in 1861. If they acted quickly this time they could avert a second 'irrepressible conflict.'

With class tensions escalating, Chinese exclusion would both mollify and protect the working classes. Exclusion, Mungen argued, was for their benefit.⁷

Mungen's fusillade of anti-Chinese invective was nothing new. Such racism, while usually not so vicious, was commonplace by the early 1870s, and most Americans were familiar with the images and stereotypes invoked. Mungen's speech is more noteworthy for its political implications. The Ohio Congressman claimed to be speaking in the name of American labor. Mungen made no allowance for the distinction between importation and immigration, consciously blurring the two terms. "...Chinese importation," he said, "is slavery." On this any worker would have agreed. But Mungen went a step further. Since China, he said, was "a nation of abject slaves," it followed that all Chinese immigrants were inevitably slaves. Blanket exclusion from the United States was simply justice and by no means inconsistent with America's traditional open-door policy:

It is said by some that we cannot stop this Chinese influx without a change in our organic law and all the subsequent laws on the question of immigration; that the principles of our Government forbid the stoppage of immigration. These objections do not apply in this instance, because these imported Chinese are not immigrants in the legal sense of the word....

Comparing "the abominable traffic" in "coolies" to the African slave trade, Mungen concluded: "As the boy said, 'It is all the same thing, only spelled differently.' It is slavery, and not immigration." Mungen made no acknowledgement of voluntary Chinese immigrants. He couldn't, for in his mind they did not exist. Consequently, the bill he proposed urged an end to "all further importation of Chinese." Such a law, he said, would result in "forbidding any Chinese to come to our country." The only exceptions were for travelers and merchants "in limited numbers, under certain restrictions." By using the terms importation and immigration as synonyms (at least as they applied to the Chinese) Mungen effectively ignored working-class demands and helped transform the issue from a debate on foreign contract labor to a referendum on Chinese exclusion. And he did this, he said, for the American worker. Thus began a long (though sporadic) campaign to convince workers that they wanted something they did not say they wanted, and at the same time convince others that this was indeed what workers wanted.⁸

Mungen's speech included almost everything an exclusionist could have desired: anti-Chinese epithets, paeans to American superiority, and most importantly, accusations that all Chinese immigrants were slaves. The only thing Mungen lacked was evidence. A prominent government official soon stepped in to rectify this

omission. David H. Bailey had just been appointed United States Consul to Hong Kong. As head of the consulate, one of his chief duties--as stipulated by the "anti-coolie" act of 1862--was to make sure that all Chinese coming to the U.S. were free and voluntary immigrants.⁹ He therefore undertook as one of his initial tasks an investigation of Chinese immigration and the "coolie" trade. Bailey spent four months investigating and issued his report in April 1871. It was a damning indictment. "The whole subject" of Chinese immigration, he wrote,

is an anomaly. Rules that will do elsewhere in the world, when applied in considering questions of immigration, have no application to Chinese immigration to the United States. Immigrants to America from other parts of the world go of their own volition, free and voluntary. Emigration from China to all parts of the world is an organized trade, in which men of large capital, and hongs of great wealth, engage as a regular traffic, by which men are bought and sold for so much per head, precisely as a piece of merchandise is handled, at its market value.

Bailey then described in lurid detail how the system worked. Importers (or their agents) scoured China to find and hoodwink unsuspecting peasants. "Men and boys are decoyed by all sorts of tricks, opiates, and illusory promises," he wrote, "into the hands of the traders. Once in the clutches of these men-dealers, by a system of treachery and terrorism, connived at by the local Chinese authorities, ... the stupefied cooly is overawed into making a contract...." The contracts stipulated that the "cooly" [sic] labor "for a series of years in a foreign country." Upon "faithful

performance" of his duties, he would be brought back to China by his "purchaser." In making the contract, Bailey wrote, the immigrant "gives a mortgage on his wife and children" as collateral to insure compliance. Once signed, the "contract is sold by the dealer through his agents in the United States and elsewhere at a large advance, and is a source of great profit to capitalists, who have the means to buy and sell large numbers of men." This entire practice, Bailey concluded, "prostitutes everybody here, and thus far has prostrated every one who has stood up against it."¹⁰

After this macabre portrayal of the "coolie trade," Bailey distinguished between immigration and importation. Many Chinese immigrants, he said, were free men and had nothing to do with "this traffic in laborers." Such a phenomenon was due chiefly to American influence.

Contact with American ideas and the spirit of American law has, in some measure, modified the rule as applied to Chinese emigrants going to the United States, so that there is in reality free and voluntary emigration; but it is so surrounded, mixed up, and tainted with the virus of the coolie trade, as to require the utmost vigilance and scrutiny to separate the legitimate from the illegitimate emigration.

Bailey complained that the overwhelming number of Chinese immigrants leaving on each ship made it impossible for him to certify whether they left freely or under contract. Enforcement of the "anti-coolie" act thus became "a complete farce," he said. He suggested expanding the consular staff and urged a more thorough investigation of the matter. Such an investigation, he noted, along with stricter laws to

curtail the present abuses would "largely negative the clamor of a growing public opinion in the United States hostile to the introduction of Chinese or servile labor...."

In closing, he stated: "Legitimate emigration and legitimate commerce shall have my active co-operation and encouragement in every possible lawful way; but if commerce demands at my hands assistance in a new mode of enslaving men, ... I will not lend my aid to build up its nefarious traffic, nor bow to the behests of the great houses that are interested in forcing this great wrong."¹¹

In the following weeks, Bailey produced various documents relating to the coolie trade. Most of these concerned Chinese workers bound for Peru but several mentioned the United States. In one such document, a "Chinese broker" named Lai-on testified that a George E. Payne of San Francisco had hired him to round up as many immigrants as he could find and send them to California. Payne, he claimed, promised him five dollars for each immigrant he procured, and agreed to cover both transportation costs and fees of "sub-agents." Lai-on soon rounded up 270 men and lodged them in Hong Kong at his own expense while preparations for the voyage were underway. At last, Lai-on handed out tickets--provided him by Payne--to each immigrant as they boarded the ship for America. A few of the immigrants, Lai-on claimed, signed labor contracts. Once aboard, many of the Chinese became suspicious of the

situation and before the ship could pull out of the harbor a riot ensued. In the aftermath, all the prospective immigrants returned to shore.¹²

A brief investigation followed. Lai-on testified that all the Chinese were leaving Hong Kong freely "of their own accord." A local official, however, charged that Lai-on may have acted illegally. By expecting "the coolies ... to have signed the contracts when on board," and technically already on their way to America, the official suggested that Lai-on and his superiors were seeking to evade the "anti-coolie" act. Bailey himself concluded that many of the Chinese had been "inveigled" and "kidnapped" by Lai-on and, upon detecting the subterfuge, rose up in revolt. Whatever the case, the event suggested an involved underground network in which Americans, Chinese, and other nationals conspired to import laborers to the United States.¹³

Taken altogether, Bailey's dispatches seemed to offer convincing evidence of an ongoing "coolie trade" in which hundreds if not thousands of Chinese immigrants were coming to the United States as contract laborers. Was there any validity to his reports? In Chinese Immigration, the first scholarly account of Chinese immigration and the Exclusion Act, Mary Roberts Coolidge dismissed Bailey's reports as "a mosaic of falsehood and misrepresentation." Bailey, she noted, didn't even speak Chinese. He invented this "misinformation," she wrote, to cover up his own

maladministration, and was later found to have embezzled as much as \$40,000 while in office. Coolidge may well be right in her estimation of Bailey, but her "expose" of his misdeeds misses the point. Bailey served as U.S. Consul in Hong Kong from 1871 to 1879. Whatever malfeasances he may have committed in office were not detected until the end of his career. For nine years Bailey was among the highest-ranking American officials in China. He had close day-to-day contact with immigrants, shippers, and go-betweens, and was the first American Consul to even claim to investigate the subject of Chinese immigration. He had, in effect, a monopoly on the "evidence." Furthermore, his position carried both prestige and authority. His first-hand reports ultimately assumed an official status. As government documents they provided strong support that the "coolie trade" thrived and prospered. Who, indeed, had the evidence or prominence to challenge a U.S. Consul in Hong Kong who was on the scene? Erroneous or not, Bailey's reports gave substance to myriad charges of contract labor and importation, and vested the charges with the mantle of government officialdom. They in effect "proved" the existence of imported contract labor.¹⁴

Bailey thus provided the one item Mungen had lacked: documentation. Anyone seeking justification to oppose the Chinese could now refrain from wild-eyed accusations and rely instead on sober government documents. And Bailey's

reports dovetailed nicely with Mungen's charges. Mungen had presented a simple equation: immigration equals importation equals slavery. Bailey had distinguished between the first two but found them so entangled in practice that they could hardly be separated. If Chinese exclusion would eliminate these various abuses it could even be seen as an act of humanity. Taken together, Mungen and Bailey offered the working classes (and anyone else) a convenient principled argument they could utilize to oppose Chinese immigration. It was simple. It was easy. And it was just.

But workers didn't buy it. The week after Mungen delivered his speech in Washington, bricklayers gathered in Pittsburgh for their national convention. They denounced "the importation of coolie labor" but said nothing about Chinese immigration. Nor did delegates to an executive meeting of the National Labor Congress in Washington a few days later. They opposed "the importation of Coolies or other servile labor," but made no mention of immigration. And in early February, in response to demands by the New York State Workingmen's Assembly in Albany, "Boss" Tweed introduced a bill banning anyone from bringing Chinese laborers into New York on contracts made out of state. Neither the Workingmen's Assembly nor Tweed's bill urged any restriction of immigration. Thus within a month of Mungen's speech a variety of working-class representatives ignored his comments and continued to stress importation as the

evil, not immigration. If workers considered the terms interchangeable, as Mungen did, it is indeed curious that none of them ever noted it and that they deliberately used just the one term.¹⁵

Perhaps the bricklayers, N.L.C. leaders, and members of the New York State Workingmen's Assembly had simply not heard or read Mungen's recent speech. If so, the Workingman's Advocate sought to remedy the problem immediately. Editor Andrew C. Cameron began printing excerpts of Mungen's address in February. Lengthy installments appeared in every issue over the next two months assuring the speech wide readership among the working classes. Cameron drew attention to it and urged workers to study it carefully. At the same time Mungen's speech was receiving this free publicity, more rumors surfaced of manufacturers preparing to import Chinese laborers. Coal mine operators in Hocking Valley, Ohio, threatened to bring in Chinese workers to break a strike during the winter. So did mineowners in Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania. In April, manufacturers and leather dealers held a convention in Baltimore and suggested importing Chinese workers. And at month's end, the Workingman's Advocate reported that a thousand "Coolies ... are to be brought from Asia to work in the quarries of Portland, Maine."¹⁶

History seemed to be repeating itself. Just as in 1869 and 1870, threats tumbled out in procession, all aiming to

intimidate workers and keep them from striking. Again the battle lines were being drawn. Amid this atmosphere of confrontation and attack, representatives of the Knights of St. Crispin gathered in New York City. They came from all over the continent--Massachusetts, Maryland, Ohio, Illinois, Missouri, California, and Canada--determined to make their voices heard. No union had confronted the Chinese issue more directly. Sampson had challenged them first in North Adams the previous June. Then in December the Crispins had conducted a bitter strike in New York City in which employers threatened to import Chinese workers. The issue had not gone away, and Crispins were prepared to face it head-on.¹⁷

On April 21, a delegation of Crispins attended a weekly meeting of the city's Workingmen's Union. Though small, the delegation aired many Crispin grievances concerning Chinese workers. Michael Sheehan of California gave a vitriolic speech condemning the Chinese. He described a secret labor society called the Industrial Reformers which had organized on the Pacific Coast to boycott those who employed "coolie labor" and use all their powers to discourage Chinese immigration. More vehement was a letter from Albert M. Winn, a Democratic politician from California. "Down with the [Burlingame] treaty, and no Chinese emigrants," Winn declared in the letter read aloud to the audience. Perhaps more significant was Winn's advice to Eastern workers to

stop splitting hairs on the issue. "What is needed by all workingmen in the crisis is--no fiddling on the terms immigration and importation--but an absolute bar set up against the further progress of those eastern locusts among us."¹⁸

Following these two calls for exclusion, Samuel P. Cummings approached the rostrum. Just 39 years old, Cummings was the most prominent Crispin leader in the nation. A former G.A.R. soldier in the 10th Massachusetts, as well as a father of four children, he was equally at home at his workbench in Danvers as at an executive meeting of labor reformers. He was an effective orator--"sometimes eloquent," noted the Workingman's Advocate--and a superb union organizer. More than anyone else he was responsible for the protest meetings that had ignited the uproar against importation the previous summer. The partisan New York Star called him "a veteran worker in the cause of labor, an indefatigable writer and speaker, a thorn in the flesh of Bay State politicians, and a very able debater withal." The more hostile New York Herald described him as "the head and tail of Massachusetts laboring men and women." And the Workingman's Advocate, despite differences over the Chinese issue, still referred to him affectionately as "'Our Sam.'" Addressing the Workingmen's Union that evening, Cummings maintained his pro-immigration/anti-importation stance. At no time did he urge exclusion of Chinese immigrants.

Rather, he preferred "to make war on the capitalists who introduced the Chinese into the country," and suggested taxing those who imported them. As the New York Times noted, "Mr. CUMMINGS ... counseled a more liberal spirit" than that shown by Messrs. Sheehan or Winn.¹⁹

Cummings did not sway from his original position. A few nights later he presented his observations on the present conflict between wage-earners and employers. "It is strange," he said,

that in this great country, with all its undeveloped wealth, the two great powers--labor and capital--are arrayed against each other, instead of going hand in hand together. Why is this? Because Capital says to Labor, "I will own you." Is this just? Is it reasonable? We believe in the largest liberty consistent with the best interests of society, and we maintain that the work produced by the muscle and brain that God has given us, should be taken from us by no man who is no better in his sight than we are.

This was the language of a Civil War veteran and a generation schooled in the ideology of republicanism and equal rights. No longer did a man have a right to own another man. No longer did a man have a right to rule another man without his consent. This was the language that resonated among the working classes in the Reconstruction era. To Cummings, the solution lay in cooperative, worker-owned factories so that "each man, as he raises his hammer from his bench, does so with the consciousness that every blow he strikes is struck for himself." It was a solution of inclusion, not exclusion.²⁰

Cummings delivered this message at a "grand mass meeting" the Crispins held at Cooper Union on April 26. Other speakers addressed the audience and offered variations on his theme. The first orator, Nelson W. Young, had delivered the opening address at the Tompkins Square meeting the past June. As president of the Workingmen's Union, he ably expressed working-class grievances concerning the Chinese. He denounced capitalists who imported them to break strikes and depress wages with the ultimate aim of destroying unions. "The Crispins of the United States," he said, "... were altogether against the importation of a class of labor which sought to undermine the workings of their organization." Young also blasted the Grant Administration for not enacting "a law forbidding Coolie labor into this country except under certain restrictions." Young by no means masked his antipathy toward Chinese workers: "as long as a man had served a good apprenticeship, and was able to do his work, he should not be cashiered in the interest of a new-comer who was a barbarian. Intelligent labor, in a word, was entitled to a distinction in preference to Coolie labor." Despite this denunciation, Young did not let his prejudices overcome his judgment, a judgment, he said, that workers shared throughout the United States and Canada. "Personally," he said, "they did not--no workingman could--oppose the Chinese...." He continued:

let him come, if he comes, like the Irishman, and men of other nationalities come, of his own free will, and to make this country his home; but they [the workingmen] do oppose this wholesale importation of a servile race, brought here for speculative purposes, to be farmed out to the highest bidder for a term of years, and then sent back to the country from whence they came. No good could result from this, and evil must surely follow it.²¹

The next speaker, William McLaughlin of Massachusetts, delivered essentially the same message. "We do not object to the introduction of the Coolie," he said, "if he comes as other immigrants do; but we do object, and strenuously denounce the introduction of them as cheapeners and debasers of labor." Other speakers, including Sheehan, added little to the debate, and the resolutions adopted by the meeting echoed the views that rank-and-file Crispins had first voiced the preceding summer. "The introduction, by grasping capitalists, of cheap coolie labor under the contract system into the United States, is not only a gross violation of our rights as citizen mechanics," the Crispins stated, "but an overt act of hostility on their part against the best interests of free American workmen." The Crispins resolved that "we directly hold the speculators and capitalists engaged in this unholy traffic responsible for the evils at present created by it, and likely to spring from its continuance." Class hatred abounded as Crispins squarely blamed capital for the "coolie" problem. At no time did they call for Chinese exclusion. In yet another resolution they declared:

The free soil of the United States has been an asylum for the oppressed and needy of other lands, where they have been generously received and a fair field shown them for the exercise of their talents, and while we still welcome them coming as individuals, we protest against this Pagan invasion such as is threatened by the wholesale importation of Coolies who, we honestly believe, are in no way responsible for their transportation hither.²² [emphasis mine]

Almost a full year had elapsed since North Adams.

Despite considerable pressure from prominent labor advocates and West Coast residents, workers still maintained their open immigration stance. Even as "pro-labor" politicians such as Mungen and anti-Chinese activists such as Winn argued that there was no difference between immigration and importation--or at least no difference worth noting or fighting for--workers continued to distinguish carefully between the two. As workers saw it, and as Bailey's report claimed, the manner in which Chinese workers were being imported was a far cry from ordinary immigration. To workers, immigration and importation remained vitally different issues.

As the 1870s progressed, pressure to close ranks against the Chinese mounted, from California, from Washington, and from the office of the nation's leading labor journal, the Workingman's Advocate. The Advocate's editor, as stated, was English-born Andrew Carr Cameron. A printer by trade, the bearded, round-faced Cameron had been identified with the labor movement since the 1850s. As

president of both the Chicago Trades Assembly and the Grand Eight-Hour League, Cameron was in the forefront of labor reform and labor politics in the post-Civil War era. On many issues, such as eight hours, cooperative factories, and land and currency reform, he was closely in tune with working-class sentiment and ranked among its shapers and leaders. On other issues, such as racial integration and black equality, he tended to be in advance of fellow workers. But on the Chinese question Cameron was completely out of step with his audience and spent the better part of a decade trying to get the working classes to march with him.²³

As early as 1869 Cameron had printed vicious, anti-Chinese diatribes and he picked up the pace in 1870. The following years saw no letup. Accuracy became immaterial in the pursuit of his cause. In June 1871 he misreported the resolutions passed by the Crispins, stating that they had strongly opposed Chinese immigration. Such distortion fueled Cameron's one-man campaign to rally workers behind the exclusionist banner. Scarcely an issue of the Workingman's Advocate appeared without blasting the Chinese and singling them out for condemnation. Cameron called one Chinese immigrant the most "deplorable, miserable-looking specimen of humanity" he had ever seen and branded them all "pestiferous vagabonds and yeleps." Chinese immigration, he warned, was "the viper we are hugging to our bosoms." In

1872 and 1873 the Advocate ran two separate multi-part series on the "Chinese Problem," decrying the dangers of "coolie labor." The purpose of the latter series, Cameron wrote, entitled "Chinese Filth and Disease," was "to make some graphic extracts, at the risk of turning the stomachs of our readers." This column included descriptions of Chinese "lepers" making cigars, their "scabs ... continually falling from their loathsome carcasses, mixing with the tobacco which they handle," sure to infect the innocent American cigar smoker. When would such an infection break out? Perhaps "in one year," Cameron said, "or in ten years, and children may inherit the disease from the careless father." And so it was with Chinese immigration as a whole. Illness became its metaphor. The Chinese, one article noted, "serve as miasmatic matter sufficient to contaminate the atmosphere as well as corrupt the body politic. They are the seed of disease, from the itch to the small-pox, and are unfit for improvement in the common scale of humanity." Unless excluded at once, the Chinese would unleash a virus that would doom American civilization for good.²⁴

A poem in the Workingman's Advocate in 1873 combined these themes with paranoid visions and lurid images all aimed to alert the working man:

They are coming, they are coming,
Every week a thousand more,
From the crowded towns of Asia
And the great Mongolian shore.
They leave their homes and fatherland
With all that makes them dear,

For better pay and better fare
That wait the toilers here.
They leave their wives behind them,
Their hopes are all before,
They are coming, they are coming,
Every week a thousand more.

Beyond the great Pacific,
Where the ocean meets the sky,
Four hundred million Chinamen
Your vision may descry.
And every China steamship
That comes sailing up the bay,
Is filled to overflowing with
The children of Cathay
And a thousand welcomes wait them
From their brethren on the shore;
They are coming, they are coming,
Every week a thousand more.

They are swarming in the cities,
They are crowding in the mines,
And they toil from morn till evening
Where half a dollar shines.
They are weaving cloth and blankets,
They are making shirts and shoes,
And the tools of many a handicraft
They are learning how to use.
They wash our clothes, they make cigars,
They're keeping many a store;
They are coming, they are coming,
Every week a thousand more.

They are cooking in the kitchen,
To poor Bridget's sad dismay,
They are working on the railroads,
For about six bits a day.
They are minding little babies,
They are delving in the sod,
And building shanties for themselves
And temples for their god.
They are peddling fruits and vegetables
Round from door to door,
They are coming, they are coming,
Every week a thousand more.

They are bringing plague and pestilence
In fever-laden ships,
And taking gold and silver back
On their returning trips.
They are bringing hordes of prostitutes
To ply their trade of shame,

And breeding vice and foul disease
Too terrible to name.
In fetid lanes and alleys
They are like a festering sore,
They are coming, they are coming
Every week a thousand more.

They are traveling up our valleys,
Singly and in dusky files,
In stages, cars, and e'en on foot,
The long and dusky miles.
From Great Salt Lake to Frisco,
From La Paz to Puget Sound,
There's not a camp nor settlement
Where "John" may not be found.
A hundred thousand Chinamen
Have come this way before,
They are coming, COMING, COMING,²⁵
Every week a thousand more.

Week in and week out Cameron broadcast the dangers of Chinese immigration and urged workers to unite behind Chinese exclusion. His numberless articles and racist accounts have had more of an impact on modern scholars, however, than they did on contemporary workers. In an era when newspapers, especially those geared to the working classes, folded with great rapidity, the Workingman's Advocate stands out as one of the better written and longest-lived labor journals of the era--and the only one for which a large majority of issues still exist.²⁶ As a result many historians have tended to rely heavily on Cameron's journal and accepted its positions at face value as an accurate reflection of working-class sentiment across the nation. A careful reading, however, reveals that many workers took strong exception to positions advanced by the Workingman's Advocate. Such exceptions had surfaced most

noticeably the previous summer. They surfaced again the following year at the annual meeting of the Cigar Makers International Union. The cigar makers, as mentioned earlier, had endorsed the pro-immigration/anti-importation stance. Meeting in Boston in September 1871, a dispute erupted not directly over the Chinese question but over which labor newspaper should be the union's "official organ"--the Workingman's Advocate edited by Cameron or the New Haven Union edited by Alexander Troup. After Samuel P. Cummings, Troup had been the leading organizer of the 1870 protest demonstrations, delivering addresses at the meetings in Troy, North Adams, Boston, and New York. He identified strongly with the pro-immigration/anti-importation stance, and it was he, in fact, who had urged delegates at the National Labor Congress to make a sharp distinction between the two issues. A lively floor fight erupted in Boston between supporters of each journal, and delegates finally formed a committee to settle the matter. Cameron emerged victorious, but not before a minority report repudiated his newspaper "on account of its unreliability and general dissatisfaction." Whether this was based on Cameron's Chinese position is not known, but it nonetheless illustrates that disparities existed between working-class leaders and the Workingman's Advocate. Cameron's journal remains a vital source for labor historians but its outlook

cannot always be regarded as representative of the class for which it claimed to speak.²⁷

Evidence of rank-and-file interest concerning the issue of Chinese immigration could sometimes be subtle and must be inferred. In an effort to elevate the Workingman's Advocate to the status of a national labor journal, Cameron generously reprinted letters from workers and correspondents across the country. These dealt with local working-class matters, labor reform, and relevant political issues. Scarcely any letters from any Eastern subscriber endorsed his position on Chinese immigration. Readers opposed only importation. Moreover, several criticized Cameron harshly. One particular editorial in November 1870 which championed the newspaper's "broad, catholic, comprehensive principles ... which ignore all creeds, sexes and nationalities ... no matter whether of Milesian, Teutonic, New England, Pottawotamie or Ethiopian origin," provoked a scathing response. D.S. Curtiss of Washington, D.C., denounced the Workingman's Advocate for its hypocrisy in not welcoming Chinese:

I do not believe we can, with justice, or consistency, proscribe one race or people any more than another ... we can dictate the terms so far as that all shall be free, and that none shall be brought as slaves, and we can prescribe that the conditions of all shall be similar ...; that's as far, I think, as we can rightfully, or in sound reason, undertake to determine or dictate. If Chinamen will come voluntarily and be citizens, we cant [sic] debar them.

No letters challenged this position.²⁸

Many workers simply remained apathetic over the issue of Chinese immigration. One reason Cameron printed tirades week after week, he claimed, was to rouse workers from their torpor. "We look forward to the time," he wrote in June 1872, "when the arrival of cargo after cargo of Chinese laborers in the United States will not be received with the same complacency as at present. We shall see." But Cameron saw little to make him hopeful. Two months later he launched his first seven-part series, "Coolie Alias Cheap Labor," with the directive: "We have repeatedly warned workingmen of the insidious character of this 'Coolie importation' and the significance which should be attached to the movement as bearing upon the great labor question." Despite the endless stream of anti-Chinese articles and constant entreaties to settle the question once and for all, the Advocate convinced few workers. Yet Cameron persisted. In December 1872 he noted: "We have been trying for the last two years to impress upon the minds of our readers ... the inauguration of a system of slave labor that would eventually level the working men down to a degradation as low, if not lower than that of the African, under the old slave regime...." Cameron's scare tactics had no discernible effect. A year later he ruefully acknowledged he had made little headway. Finding no support for exclusion from the working classes, he could praise only a handful of newspapers along the Atlantic coast who foresaw

the "perils" of cheap labor and Chinese immigration. A sympathetic article in the New York Courier, he noted in October 1873, "proves that at least some of the Eastern press are beginning to realize the danger incurred by the importation of the cheap labor leprous wretches, and the baneful effect it is ultimately going to have on the industrial interests of the country."²⁹

In Cameron's estimation, Eastern workers were doing little enough to oppose importation and next to nothing to oppose immigration. On the latter charge Cameron was correct, but on the former he was mistaken. Workers continued to fight importation whenever possible--and from wherever it came. During New York City's first general strike in the spring of 1872, carpenters met at Masonic Hall to hear speaker after speaker advocate solidarity and the eight-hour day. One orator focused instead on the evils of importation. He denounced "the practice of immigrant societies sending their agents abroad to induce mechanics by false representations to come to this country, and thereby creating unfair competition among workingmen, by which their wages are commonly reduced to almost STARVATION RATES." The orator evidently referred to Europeans (American workers seldom called Chinese "mechanics"), but the message was identical. "Some steps," he concluded, "... ought to be taken to put a stop to all forced immigration, which is encouraged by monopolizers." Whether focused on Europe or

Asia, opposition to imported labor (which played no role in the New York City strike) remained a key rallying cry among the working classes.³⁰

The Iron Molders' International Union maintained a leading role in the movement against imported labor. Since the 1860s, before William Sylvis's untimely death, molders had been in the forefront of the campaign to outlaw importation. In the early 1870s, American iron molders suspected that certain bosses had contacted prospective strikebreakers in Britain. In 1872 union president William Saffin noted the alleged activities of "an emigrant society ... whose business it is to supply unscrupulous employers with imported foreign labor, wherever an American mechanic would dare to demand his rights." European "emigrants of all trades," he added, "are apt to fall into the hands of harpies and become unwitting tools of unscrupulous men...." Saffin looked not to lawmakers in Washington for a remedy but to fellow workers in Great Britain. He contacted the leaders of the I.M.I.U.'s British counterparts, the Friendly Society of Iron Founders, with branches in England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales, and urged a coordinated effort by fellow tradesmen on both sides of the Atlantic to fight the importation of workers. Molders emigrating from one country to another, Saffin suggested, ought to be permitted to join the sister union overseas without any restrictions or initiation fees. The only condition Saffin required was

that British iron molders "not enter into written contracts to work in any foundry in the United States or Canadas, previous to their arrival in either country."³¹

Such international working-class cooperation could thus put an end to importation where governments failed to act. The British iron workers, however, were less cooperative than the Americans would have liked. The Friendly Society of Iron Founders of England amended Saffin's proposal to cover only situations where American workers "may be on strike, or locked out, or in dispute with their employers...." Under "normal" conditions, in other words, signing contracts to work overseas would be acceptable. Other British unions were even more circumspect. The Scottish iron molders sidestepped the proposal and informed the I.M.I.U. that it was "about to establish an emigration scheme" to raise funds to assist union members "wishing to emigrate to America or Australia...." While this was not importation, it hardly met with the approval of the I.M.I.U. The Welsh and Irish branches did not respond to Saffin's request.³²

The I.M.I.U.'s campaign against importation thus met with little immediate success from abroad, but a few incidents offered hope for the future. During a strike at an iron foundry in Rome, Georgia, in October 1872, a company director traveled to Scotland to procure workers. In Glasgow the director advertised for molders, machinists,

blacksmiths, and puddlers, and assured prospective recruits that at his foundry in Georgia there was no strike, no trouble, "only a scarcity of hands." Twenty-two workers ultimately signed up. They soon embarked for America, many of them accompanied by their families. Native workers in Rome quickly informed them of the situation. At once the Scotchmen supported the strike and refused to work. Despite entreaties from the company, they "would not scab." The company soon gave in. This brief episode illustrates that even if British unions would not formally agree to abolish importation many workers still honored timeworn principles of class solidarity, and would not allow themselves to be used as weapons to break strikes.³³

Such events inspired the I.M.I.U. to continue its campaign against imported labor. The union's journal printed and reprinted articles condemning manufacturers who openly advocated importation, and editorials frequently denounced the practice:

The majority of employers think nothing of inducing men to enter their employ by representations that they know to be false, and which they break with impunity even when they could fulfill them. In times of strikes, or lock-outs, it is a common thing for employers to advertise for men, promising steady work and good wages, when at the same time they had fully determined that their old hands shall be employed the moment they come to terms, and the new men are only brought to bear to force the old hands to terms.

This editorial appeared in October 1874, a year after the onset of the nation's first industrial depression. Entitled

"False Pretenses," it became more trenchant as it went along:

Hundreds of thousands of men and families have been induced to come from Europe to this country by the false statements of interested parties, and the poor emigrant has no redress. Even now, when industry is paralyzed, and tens of thousands of mechanics out of employment, the emigrant agencies in Europe, sustained by American capitalists, are in full blast, and every vessel arriving from foreign ports, swells the list of victims to unscrupulous capital's false pretenses.³⁴

Just as this editorial was being typeset, the importation of foreign workers provoked a violent confrontation in western Pennsylvania. The mining regions of the Keystone State had long been the site of bloody labor conflicts. The Molly Maguire episode, just then approaching its zenith, marked only one of many instances involving murder and armed resistance in the coal fields during the 1870s. A strike during the summer of 1874 was no different--except for the method the company used to break it. "Owing to the continued troubles arising out of the miner's strike," the Allegheny Mail reported in September, "... the proprietors have at length resorted to the plan of importing foreign miners." Three mineowners soon headed east to procure workers from the recently-established New York Italian Labor Company. For five months this company had been supplying various employers with Italian immigrants willing to work "at panic prices" and break strikes. The company advertised heavily in local papers and trade journals and hired out laborers as far north as

Massachusetts. The mineowners contacted the company and met with W.S. Griffith, one of its directors, and on September 25, "they concluded a bargain" for 300 laborers. Griffith would provide workers with clothes and food, and the employers would pay them between 200 and 300 dollars a year.³⁵

The next day, Griffith placed the Italian immigrants on a train bound for the mines of Pennsylvania. Striking workers, learning of the scheme, posted handbills at the mines threatening "fatal vengeance" against any scabs, and armed themselves in preparation for the strikebreakers. In response, the city dispatched a small detachment of police to protect the train carrying the Italians. Pennsylvania Governor John Hartranft promised additional troops if they were needed. The Italians were also heavily armed. Some shouldered muskets and others carried hooked knives by which, according to a reporter for the Pittsburgh Leader, "with a quick upward stroke they could ruin a man in a second." The showdown took place on September 27. As the imported laborers disembarked from the train gunfire erupted. The police could do little. By nightfall, several Italians lay dead.³⁶

The key point of this grisly and tragic incident is that workers remained steadfast in their hatred of imported contract labor whatever its origins or nationality. They opposed anyone--whether from Europe or Asia--being brought

in to take their jobs. Workers sprinkled their protests with hatred and bigotry--they called the strikebreakers "cutthroats," "outlaws," "desperadoes," and former soldiers in the Papal army--but reserved their greatest wrath for the importers. The Pittsburgh Leader dubbed Griffith "the Great New York Handler of Cheap Laborers--the Man who Controls 3,000 Workingmen," while the Workingman's Advocate called him "one of the most shameless rascals on the American continent" and a "libel on humanity." As "an avowed importer of Italian brigands," he was "a creature utterly devoid of any principle of honor or manhood...." The same description might have been applied to Sampson (or Koopmanschap) four years earlier. Parallels to North Adams are striking. In both cases employers turned to foreign-born workers, importing them en masse. In both cases employers braced for violence, arming the strikebreakers and hiring extra police. Even the contracts were similar in terms of wages and accommodations. Such imported laborers, wage-earners felt, hardly fit the model of the sturdy American workman. Once laborers signed contracts and allowed themselves to be imported they could no longer act as free and independent men. As the Iron Molders' Journal stated succinctly: "The same system of contracts that has been so much talked of in the coolie system, is in full vogue with the Italians. They belong, body and soul, to contractors in New York city. They are not free agents, and

are as much slaves as any that existed twelve years ago."³⁷

As Herbert Gutman has shown, mine owners frequently employed force and imported outside groups, such as blacks and Scandinavians, to break strikes during the 1870s. Playing one group off against another proved an effective tactic. Cameron himself urged miners to give this matter their utmost attention. "THE IMPORTATION OF CHEAP LABOR," he said,

embraces alike the colored laborers of the South and characterless vagrants of Europe. In Indiana and Ohio the negro has been the medium used during the past year to whip the miners into the employers' traces, while in Pennsylvania and Illinois the brigands of Italy and the scum of Belgium and Scandinavia have served a similar purpose; and from present indications this villainous system is likely to be pursued for some time to come. Moreover, these 'importations' have been introduced in a spirit of needless insolence and bravado ... for the purpose of forcing a conflict, with the hope that the Executives of the States would be furnished a plausible excuse for crushing, with powder and ball, the honest demands of honest labor.

Importation served as a surefire spark for violence and provided employers a convenient opportunity to call on the arm of the state to enforce management policy. By the use of military force, the government thus offered indirect support for the importation of laborers. Workers often vented their anger by hurling epithets (and other items) at imported strikebreakers, but the main target of their opposition at less incendiary moments remained the system of importation itself. As the Allegheny Mail noted, mine owners vowed to keep replacing workers if they struck. "If

the Italians are not found to answer the purpose Swedes will be tried, and if they fail colored men will be set to work." The mine owners remained true to their word, ultimately importing Poles, Hungarians, and other Europeans to break strikes. Modern transportation was making the world a smaller place, facilitating movement across states and across oceans. Improved transit would only make importation easier and quicker. And cheaper. A world of peasants and poor appeared ripe for exploitation. Imported labor served as a legitimate threat to working-class power in the 1870s. Whether from China, Italy, or elsewhere, importation remained importation. It was not, in workers' minds, immigration.³⁸

Not far from the mining regions of western Pennsylvania workers had just recently made the same vital distinction between immigration and importation. In the summer of 1872, an owner of a cutlery factory brought in seventy Chinese workers to break a strike in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania. This factory was the only industrial establishment east of the Mississippi River to which Chinese workers were imported between 1871 and 1875. The Chinese signed multi-year contracts guaranteeing them both daily "rations" and a monthly wage of twenty dollars, one quarter that of striking workers. Factory operatives at once protested the importation but to little avail. The owner imported a second group of Chinese in December. Workers mobilized

again and at a meeting drew up a petition for submission to Congress. Despite their undisguised anger they chose their words very carefully. They wrote that about 165 Chinese laborers "have been imported for a cutlery company" in their town. These laborers, they added, had made "contracts ... for long periods of servitude ... at wages so low as to forbid competition by American workmen...." In the petition workers protested "their introduction into the United States, in the manner it is done," [emphasis mine] and urged legislators "to pass a law prohibiting any further importation of Chinese laborers under contracts made in China...." The petition never once mentioned the word immigration or suggested exclusion. As one Beaver Falls operative remarked, "We workingmen hold that Chinamen should come to America just as any other class of foreigners, and that buying them for a term of years is only Slavery in another form."³⁹

Violence shortly erupted in Beaver Falls, not between displaced workers and newcomers but among the Chinese themselves. The second group of Chinese laborers received only sixty cents a day, fifteen cents less than the first group. They went on strike demanding equal wages. The owner refused to bargain. Then, according to one account, the Chinese foreman, in league with the owner, issued regulations restricting gambling and opium-smoking. These actions reportedly led the Chinese to attack the foreman and

a riot ensued. Many Chinese then quit and decided to return to California. The irony of the event--"patient," "docile" workers imported to break a strike and then themselves striking and rioting--was not lost on American workers. John Siney, Secretary of the Miners' National Association, commented sarcastically, "See if such be not the end of the 'noblest scheme yet invented to enable employers to pay wages according to the laws of supply and demand.'" The factory owner, however, remained undeterred and imported yet "[a]nother cargo of Chinese" in the fall of 1873. Displaced native workers remained angry at the prospect of continued importation, but did not blame the Chinese laborers themselves. "There are now one hundred and forty Chinamen in the town, and but one woman in the party," a Beaver Falls worker wrote a year later. "They conduct themselves well, attend to their own business, and are unobjectionable to the mass of the citizens."⁴⁰

The only other case of an industrial employer importing Chinese laborers between 1871 and 1875 occurred in St. Louis along the Mississippi River. Jaynes & Company, a barrel manufacturing establishment, "picked up" sixty Chinese workers in the spring of 1873. The Workingman's Advocate reported an angry demonstration by displaced coopers at which they manifested "[c]onsiderable indignation." They stormed the factory and threatened to eject their Asian replacements, but were held in check by a "strong force of

police." In its detailed account of this episode, the Advocate made no mention of workers demanding exclusion or an end to Chinese immigration. Nearly 1,000 Chinese immigrants, the newspaper added, were presently working in the Gateway City. Relations improved, and two years later one of the Chinese immigrants applied to join the St. Louis Cigar Makers Union.⁴¹

Despite these various incidents and Cameron's barrage of anti-Chinese articles, American workers remained steadfast. Importation of Chinese laborers frightened them but exclusion of them as immigrants was not a solution they suggested. Most working-class meetings between 1871 and 1875 never even considered the issue, suggesting that Chinese immigration was a matter of minor or no concern. When workers did object to the Chinese they worded their protests carefully to avoid any connection to exclusion. At a large meeting of the Louisville, Kentucky, Trades Assembly in November 1873, for example, workers voiced numerous racist, anti-Chinese sentiments. They demanded Congress to "put a stop to this infamous Coolie Trade" and end the "infernal business." The depression had just begun, and one resolution stated: "If any real necessity existed for an increase of the laboring forces of the country then there would be some excuse for the importation of Chinese labor, but there is already a superabundance of workmen in every department." This may be the only instance on record of

workers acknowledging that imported labor could on occasion be justified. Still, the workers who submitted this petition--which they predicted would get 100,000 signatures --focused on the "Coolie Trade" and never demanded outright exclusion. They opposed Chinese importation bitterly but would not commit themselves to banning Chinese immigrants. So it was whenever workers in the East took a stand on the Chinese issue in the early 1870s. 42

One final point remains to be clarified. Is it possible that the distinction workers made between importation and immigration was phony? Might their vehement opposition to importation have been little more than a smoke screen masking a real demand for Chinese exclusion? Many historians have long contended that workers used these phrases interchangeably, and, indeed, the lack of precise definition of the various terms--importation, immigration, contract labor--could lend support to such an interpretation. One worker from California said as much in 1872 when he commented: "immigration ... importation ... whichever you may wish to call it, the effect is the same...." Cameron employed similar reasoning. "[T]he Advocate has held for years," began an 1874 editorial entitled "The Chinese Problem," "that there is no such thing as Chinese emigrants. It would be just as proper to say that the cured beef of Buenos Ayres emigrated to Great Britain, as to assert that the Coolies ... are emigrants."

To Cameron immigration and importation, at least as they applied to the Chinese, were one and the same. Representative Mungen and Consul Bailey had made the identical point in 1871 when they argued that Chinese immigration and importation were virtually indistinguishable. Various parties, evidently, did indeed use the terms interchangeably. Most rank-and-file workers, however, did not. Eastern workers frequently made distinctions between the two, and when they did they came out staunchly opposed to importation and clearly in favor of immigration. A resolution passed by the Michigan State Labor Union in 1873, for example, spelled out this distinction plainly: "the presence in our country of imported Chinese laborers in large numbers, is an evil entailing want and crime, and [we demand] that the Congress of the United States prohibit the importation (not emigration) of coolies or other servile laborers."⁴³ Like Crispins in New York City in 1871 and the anonymous worker in Beaver Falls in 1873, the working classes continued to go on record in favor of Chinese immigration. This was the message they wanted others to hear. This was the message they stated again and again. Historians can read any number of sinister meanings into the words workers used, but the key to interpreting their message lies in understanding the context of their protests and the dangers they recognized. Whether faced with Chinese in North Adams

and Beaver Falls, with Scotsmen in Georgia, or Italians in Pennsylvania, workers recognized importation as the evil to be guarded against--and they said so. At no time during the 1870s did workers east of the Rockies recognize immigration as the evil to be fought. They could have combined the two issues but they consciously chose not to. They took pains repeatedly to make them separate and distinct. Historians should at last accept them at their word.

Even as the depression deepened after 1873 and unemployment became more widespread, workers remained forthright and consistent in their views. In the spring of 1874 a wave of coordinated demonstrations swept the country. Workers held mass meetings in every major city from Boston, Buffalo, and Cleveland to Chicago, Detroit, and St. Paul. They also gathered in smaller towns such as Vincennes, Indiana, Belleville, Illinois, and Jackson, Michigan. Hundreds and thousands turned out on May 18 and 19 to march and protest, often combining local and national issues. New York City workers, for example, strongly condemned the municipal police force for precipitating the Tompkins Square "riot" the previous January. Columbus, Ohio, workers, on the other hand, demanded laws requiring employers to pay their workers at least once a month and compelling arbitration during strikes. The main goal of the demonstrations, however, was to protest both the corporate

and governmental policies that they believed were causing the hard times and urge legislation that would alleviate working-class suffering. In only a handful of meetings did the Chinese issue surface at all, and when it did its mention was brief. Cyrenus Osborne Ward, a Brooklyn machinist, delivered the strongest denunciation of the Chinese, but focused on "importation" and "the contract system." He denounced the "introduction of coolie labor" and made the remarkable demand, "They should be cleared out of the land or forced to vote." Such a condition would presumably eliminate their "docileness" and raise them to the status of citizens. The meeting, however, disregarded his counsel and urged only an end to importation.⁴⁴

John Junio was more specific. At the meeting in Syracuse, this former leader of the Cigar Makers' International Union left little question as to what workers wanted and what they didn't. "The Coolie trade was ... an evil which should receive the condemnation of every honest man," the Workingman's Advocate reported Junio saying on the steps of City Hall. "The companies which introduced these Asiatics here made large profits out of the business, and the damage to all our working interests was immense. They had been introduced into Massachusetts, and had there driven out good, honest white workingmen and their families. Which class was most beneficial to a town, these Chinamen without families, and nothing to tax, or the white men with their

families? There could be no doubt on this question." Junio concluded his speech with the consensus workers had held for many years: "There was no objection to Chinamen if they came voluntarily, and were allowed to compete fairly with others in this country."⁴⁵

Whenever workers took the time to explain their position they left no doubt as to where they stood. Perhaps no one stated the position of the rank-and-file worker more clearly than Samuel Mason of Canton, Ohio. In a lengthy letter to the Workingman's Advocate in 1873, this otherwise anonymous worker confronted the issue head-on. He admitted his prejudices and personal distaste of Chinese people. He presented both sides of the case and stressed the dangers of imported labor. Mason, however, did not see exclusion as an appropriate solution and attacked the Advocate's long-held stance. "We will take another view of the question," he wrote, "not doubting the least that the Chinese have a perfect right, as well as any other foreigners, to migrate to this country if they wish to better their condition." In his final sentence Mason summed up both workers' contempt for importation and their support for open immigration: "But John Chinaman as an individual, and John Chinaman in gangs, bought and sold by greedy speculators, to break down the price of American labor, are quite different articles."⁴⁶

Even the National Labor Union, the outstanding example of ambiguity on the issue in 1870, eventually addressed the distinction long championed by the rank and file. Such action, however, came as the N.L.U. was about to expire. Richard Trevellick, president of the N.L.U., opened the 1871 National Labor Congress in St. Louis with much the same address he had used the previous year when anti-Chinese fervor had reached its peak. "'I again call the attention of this body to the important question of the importation of the Chinese,'" he said, "'the sole object of which is to cheapen the labor of the American workman....'" The contract system, he stressed, resembled the buying and selling of human beings and "'is nothing more or less than organized slavery.'" Trevellick stated his view just as explicitly as he had in 1870. "'We do not complain of emigration,'" he said, "'but wholesale importation....'" Despite Trevellick's rhetoric, the issue did not excite the impassioned debate it had at the preceding convention in 1870. The only comments delegates made focused on importation, the recent report of Consul Bailey, and the need for workers to lobby for "the suppression of the Coolie trade." Immigration never came up. Had delegates, like the rank and file, reached consensus on the issue? Perhaps yes, perhaps no, perhaps they just did not want to confront the matter. They adopted the identical fuzzy resolution adopted at the 1870 convention.⁴⁷

Delegates gathered for their next annual convention in 1872 with great expectations. N.L.U. leaders had resolved to enter the presidential campaign and nominated a candidate to run on the National Labor Reform Party ticket. They also revised--or clarified--their position on the Chinese issue. The only Chinese laborers to which they objected, the sixth plank of the party platform read, were those "imported by capitalists." The ambiguous language was gone. Even Cameron conceded that the platform opposed only "the importation of barbarian labor." A few mainstream newspapers, however, criticized the platform, claiming that it endorsed Chinese exclusion. Such a conclusion was quickly refuted. "The Labor Reformers," remarked the Hartford Labor Journal, a new party organ, "do not object to the Chinese as emigrants, but they do object to any system that perpetuates slavery in its worst form."⁴⁸

The National Labor Union was at last in line with its constituency on the Chinese question but at this point it didn't much matter. When its candidate withdrew from the race during the summer, the National Labor Reform Party collapsed and the demise of the party spelled the death knell for the N.L.U. The organization disbanded later that year. Former leaders angrily blamed politicians for infiltrating the organization and leading it to ruin. They sought to resurrect it the following year. Christened the Industrial Congress, the new organization studiously avoided

electoral politics and partisan activity. In an effort to regain lost momentum, Cameron urged all trade leaders to join to "reason together, and have a good old-fashioned reunion similar to the Baltimore Congress of 1866--where harmony and brotherhood prevailed."⁴⁹ Early signs seemed promising. A large number of delegates met in Cleveland in July 1873, making the first Industrial Congress the best-attended gathering of national trade union officials in six years. The Congress adopted essentially the same platform as the N.L.U., but moved closer to the rank and file on the Chinese issue. In a report presented by the Committee on the Importation of Cheap Labor, delegates resolved

That as a Congress of Laboring Men, we would welcome to our shores all emigration, as skilled workmen or laborers; that our country is a home for the oppressed of all climes, but that we emphatically protest against the importation of laborers to serve a term of years for a fixed price....

The Industrial Congress urged an end to importation, a stop to federal subsidies of ships bringing "servile races ... to our shores," and modification of the Burlingame Treaty. Delegates never endorsed Chinese exclusion.⁵⁰

The next Industrial Congress met in Rochester in April 1874. Its members had thinned, but neither the diminished turnout nor the depression (now seven months old) had any discernible effect on delegates' attitudes toward Chinese workers. They passed nearly the same resolution as they had the previous year though in somewhat more strident language. They implored the U.S. Congress "to pass laws making

importing labor a criminal offense, punishable by fine and imprisonment." The Industrial Congress limped along through the depression for one more year, meeting for its last time in Indianapolis in 1875. Again, delegates made scarcely any change in their stance toward Chinese laborers. The committee chairman even commented that he did "not think it necessary for this Congress either to add to, or take from, the declaration [on imported labor] already in its platform...." Delegates merely reiterated their demand for "passage of a national law" to make the "importation of foreign laborers under contracts ... a penal offense." With that, the Industrial Congress passed out of existence.⁵¹

By any measure one chooses to examine--scattered speeches, petitions of protest, assorted letters, or formal resolutions--the message of the working classes east of the Rocky Mountains remained remarkably uniform during the early 1870s. Despite speeches by politicians, reports by government officials, and appeals by the nation's foremost labor editor, workers refused to join (let alone lead) the movement for Chinese exclusion. These were not simply the views of a handful of socialists or radical fringe members but ideas expressed deliberately and consistently by a great variety of American wage-earners. Workers vehemently denounced importation and anything resembling slavery or indentured servitude, and repeatedly urged Congress to ban contract labor from abroad. But workers carefully and

consciously shied away from any demand for restriction of immigration. The politics of exclusion was not of their making, nor did such a policy gain working-class sanction.

Both self-interest and idealism dictated working-class attitudes toward the issue. As John Higham has pointed out, many American workers were themselves foreign born and remembered well the Know-Nothing hysteria of the 1840s and '50s. They wanted nothing to do with any new anti-immigrant movement that could threaten their own stature and livelihood in the U.S. or precipitate the closing of the nation's doors to their own compatriots. Many immigrant workers maintained loyalties to their native country and had friends and relatives eager to emigrate. Sanctions against Chinese immigrants could easily lead to sanctions against other immigrants. Who would be next? In an age when neither passports nor identification papers were needed to cross national borders, immigrants wanted to remain free to travel back and forth from Europe to America. Erecting barriers could only hinder such mobility. This crude self-interest merged with the broader goals of the American labor movement. Despite the resurgence of nationalism during and after the Civil War, many wage-earners viewed themselves as part of an international community united by the bonds of class with fellows throughout the world. Whether they fought monopoly, monarchy, or entrenched capital, workers

found common cause in opposing a common enemy. The republican ideology of the war years actually strengthened this movement as the emphasis on equality and political rights generated efforts to overcome differences of race and nationality. Indicative of such efforts, many unions added the word "international" to their names and opened regular communication with union leaders abroad. Racism and ethnic bigotry still surfaced, of course, especially during labor disputes involving workers of different groups. Such bigotry remained a potent source of conflict that could be tapped--by union leaders, by politicians--in periods of unrest. But ideals too remained a potent force. And the ideal of a universal brotherhood of workers remained a guiding force among many American wage-earners. Immigration restriction would only negate such a vision. The working classes thus had ample reason to keep the doors of the nation open to all comers. However many years they or their families had been in America, few workers forgot their immigrant roots. To them, the nation ought remain, as they often said, "an asylum for the oppressed of every clime."⁵²

In tracing the origins of the Chinese Exclusion Act it is less important to assess blame than it is to study the process. Exclusion occurred at a particular moment--1882--for particular reasons. It did not occur in 1871 or 1873 or

1875 because neither legislators in Congress nor their constituents nationwide had any interest in such legislation. The only pressure lawmakers east of the Rocky Mountains felt on the issue came from the working classes, but the only remedy workers sought was a ban on imported contract labor. A handful of legislators acknowledged the problem and introduced measures to outlaw the practice. In fact, not a year passed between 1870 and 1875 in which legislators failed to present some bill relating to importation. One bill introduced by a Missouri Republican in 1871 sought "to regulate labor contracts made with immigrants." A bill from a Mississippi Republican in 1873 aimed "to prohibit contracts for servile labor." Another Republican took the opposite approach. In 1872 Representative Omar Conger of Michigan introduced a bill to legalize foreign contract labor if the superintendent of immigration ruled "that said contracts are to the advantage of the immigrant." Californians, meanwhile, took the lead in urging stricter enforcement of the anti-coolie act of 1862. Representative John M. Coghlan [R-CA] delivered a blistering attack on the Chinese in 1872 reminiscent of Mungen's speech the preceding year. He quoted heavily from Bailey's report and those of other government officials. Senator Aaron A. Sargent [R-CA] delivered a similar if briefer anti-Chinese speech in 1874 and urged his colleagues to consider legislation to prevent the further "influx of

Chinese into this country." Representative Horace F. Page [R-CA], meanwhile, urged the House Foreign Affairs Committee to consider a resolution instructing the President to open negotiations with China so as "to check or altogether prevent Chinese immigration to the United States." Sargent and Page would ultimately play key roles in securing the Chinese Exclusion Act, but at the time their efforts excited little notice. Neither their appeals nor the bills introduced by their colleagues in the early 1870s ever made it out of committee. Anti-Chinese politics simply failed to resonate nationwide. As Senator Sargent himself noted in 1874, "The matter is of very great local importance, and perhaps it is to be regretted that it is so local in its character that its importance cannot be fully estimated in other parts of the country."⁵³

California, as Sargent indicated, remained the hotbed of anti-Chinese politics. Both parties actively urged exclusion in the early 1870s and a candidate could not be elected governor without advocating immigration restriction. Both Ira Cross and Alexander Saxton have noted the united efforts of politicians, miners, small merchants, and unions in California to ban Chinese immigration in the 1850s and 1860s. By the early 1870s West Coast merchants stung by Chinese competition took a commanding role in marshaling anti-Chinese opinion. The Democratic San Francisco Examiner could not help but note the irony in this situation, as many

of the anti-Chinese merchants were Republicans who had formerly scorned Democrats for pandering to anti-Chinese sentiment. As an article in 1873 noted:

A movement against the employment of Chinamen is progressing in our city. It has not been produced by any effort of the working classes, nor is it undertaken for their benefit. A few years ago when monster meetings were held ... the few speakers who addressed those assemblages were denounced by a portion of the press as demagogues, endeavoring to promote personal designs by exciting prejudices against a docile and industrious race. The present movement has been commenced by our capitalists, to protect themselves against Chinese capitalists who have greater advantages for employing cheap labor than the former.

After San Francisco carpenters circulated an anti-Chinese petition a few months later, they found that the bulk of the signers were not workers but businessmen. Immigration restriction had become an interclass movement in California as voters of all stripes rallied to the anti-Chinese banner.⁵⁴

In 1874 California gained support from an unlikely ally--the President of the United States. In his state of the union address on December 7, Grant indicated that Bailey's report and subsequent allegations were being taken seriously in the White House. "[It is] a generally conceded fact," Grant wrote, "--that the great proportion of Chinese immigrants who come to our shores do not come voluntarily ... but come under contracts with headmen, who own them absolutely." The President was not advocating Chinese exclusion but to the delight of Californians he was acknowledging as a common truth the belief that virtually

all Chinese were imported by force. Scarcely any, he noted, emigrated freely. Even more alarming, Grant added, was the importation of females.

In a worse form does this apply to Chinese women. Hardly a perceptible percentage of them perform any honorable labor, but they are brought for a shameful purpose, to the disgrace of the communities where settled and to the great demoralization of the youth of those localities. If this evil practice can be legislated against, it will be my pleasure as well as duty to enforce any regulation to secure so desirable an end.⁵⁵

Reports of Chinese prostitution rings had become common fare in the daily press. Efforts to crack down on them had been no more successful than enforcement of the "anti-coolie" act. Grant's message, however, combined the importation of Chinese laborers with Chinese prostitutes and spurred action in Congress. The day after his message, Representative Page urged the House Foreign Affairs Committee to consider legislation to prevent the immigration and importation of Chinese men and women. Two months later the committee came forth with a bill. It specifically outlawed "the importation ... of women for the purposes of prostitution," singling out those from "China, Japan, or any Oriental country." Such women could no longer emigrate to the United States "for lewd and immoral purposes." The bill also banned the immigration of criminals (except those guilty of political crimes). The bill restated sections of the "anti-coolie" act of 1862 but added little to its definitions or particulars. U.S. consuls were again

enjoined to make sure that immigrants came freely, but contract labor from China remained legal and valid as long as laborers were not forced to come. With little debate, the House passed the bill on February 22, 1875. The Senate concurred a week later and Grant signed the bill into law on March 3.⁵⁶

Thus after more than five years of agitation Congress could come up with nothing stronger than a pallid act to ban prostitutes from entering the United States. The demands of the working classes--for an end to imported contract labor--and the demands of the West Coast--for an end to Chinese immigration--remained unmet. Neither group exerted much pressure on lawmakers and Congress felt no compulsion to heed their demands. Workers, although united in their principles, remained fragmented as an interest group. Local issues continued to dominate their political activities and their influence on Washington was virtually nil. Whatever muscle they might have flexed in Washington as a national voting bloc dissipated with the electoral fiasco of 1872. Without a stronger organization to pressure lawmakers, a ban on imported contract labor would never come to pass. Nor was the influence of the West Coast on national legislation much greater. Still a sparsely populated region, the Far West had only a handful of delegates in Congress--a mere

six seats in a House with almost 300 members.* Their proportion in the Senate was larger but by no means strong enough to attract attention or alter traditional national policy. With few exceptions, legislators from the West commanded neither seniority nor prestige in Washington, and their efforts to restrict Chinese immigration received scant support or notice in the nation's capital.

But American politics was changing. The election of 1872 signaled the end of an era. In the four previous presidential elections the Republican and Democratic parties had offered voters genuine choices on vital issues. In 1856 and 1860, positions on the extension of slavery into the West clearly demarcated the two major parties. The next election in 1864 was nothing less than a referendum on emancipation and the war itself. The 1868 campaign focused on Radical Reconstruction and the rights of former slaves. Democrats resorted to ugly race-baiting and Ku Klux Klan-sponsored violence, both of which Republicans condemned. During each of these four elections Republicans and Democrats provided radically different platforms that focused on real issues, including slavery, freedom, civil

*After reapportionment from the census of 1870, California had four representatives, and Nevada and Oregon one each. Colorado would add a seventh House seat to the West when it became a state in 1876.

rights, and equality. Voters had clear and important choices to make.

In 1872 this was no longer the case. Despite the bizarre, byzantine nature of the campaign--the Republicans splitting in two and the Democrats nominating a former abolitionist--the two major parties actually moved closer to each other. The Democrats, losers of three elections in a row, tried to put the past behind them. In their so-called "new departure," they accepted all three recent Constitutional amendments--emancipation, black citizenship, and black suffrage--as the law of the land and abandoned overt appeals to racism. They nominated New York Tribune editor Horace Greeley, the iconoclastic reformer lately reborn a conservative, who had just been nominated by the Liberal Republican party. The Liberal Republicans, led by Missouri Senator Carl Schurz, had broken away from the regular Republican organization which they believed had fallen prey to machine politicians and self-serving office-seekers. Liberal Republicans championed both civil service reform and sectional reconciliation. They hoped that Greeley could appeal to the old abolitionist wing of the party as well as those fed up with the scandal-ridden Grant Administration. Democrats, meanwhile, found Greeley's post-war conservatism on Reconstruction attractive, and in their anything-to-beat Grant strategy formed an unlikely coalition with the Liberals. Amid this slew of twists and

turnarounds, Republicans dutifully nominated Grant for a second term.

Neither principles nor ideas mattered much in the 1872 campaign. The Democrats adopted the identical platform passed by the Liberals and this platform varied little from that of the Republicans. Both the Democrats and Republicans endorsed equal rights for all and the recent amendments to the Constitution. Both platforms praised Union soldiers, favored amnesty for former rebels, and urged sectional reconciliation. Both platforms endorsed civil service reform and denounced repudiation of the public debt. The two parties used almost identical language to oppose further land grants to corporations and reserve the public domain for actual settlers. Perhaps the only major difference in the platforms was that Republicans favored abolition of the franking privilege for Congressmen. They also paid lip service to women's rights. When it came to issues it no longer much mattered whether one was a Democrat or a Republican: After a decade of cataclysmic conflicts and changes the parties now found little to openly disagree on.⁵⁷

As a result, the 1872 canvass focused more on personalities than on platforms. Greeley undertook a breakneck campaign tour of the North--which alone was an unusual event--and made a series of intemperate comments that managed to offend almost everyone. The unassuming

Grant, meanwhile, sat quietly in the White house doing nothing. In a contest of personalities--the crackpot editor v. the somber general--the need for issues diminished. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that Chinese immigration and imported contract labor played no role in the election of 1872. Politicians had no reason to inject new issues into the campaign. The old ones, although fading, provided the little substance that was needed. Republican strategists felt confident with a stand-pat candidate, and the squeaky-voiced, much-heckled Greeley practically self-destructed. Grant won in a landslide, capturing the largest majority of the popular vote of any candidate between 1836 and 1892. Republicans also swept the House and the Senate, capturing the lower chamber, 194-92, and the upper chamber, 49-19.

Despite this overwhelming victory, Republicans had reason to worry. An influential segment of their party had defected to the opposition. The coalitions forged during the Civil War and cemented by Reconstruction had shattered--and Democrats raced to pick up the pieces. In accepting the elevation of blacks to citizenship and suffrage, Democrats had at last come to terms with the results of the war. Significant partisan differences still remained--over federal intervention in the South and enforcement of civil rights--but even these would soon disappear. After a turbulent era marked by divergence on fundamental issues,

the nation's two great parties were entering an era of convergence. Racial politics fell into eclipse, at least temporarily. The issues that had forever defined the Republican party--emancipation, union, equal rights--no longer racked the nation. Victory had shorn Republicans of their purpose. And their glorious achievements of the past said little about the future. They could still wave the bloody shirt, but Democrats could take the higher road of sectional reconciliation.

This slow demise of Civil War partisanship would have a dramatic impact on national politics. As party leaders knew, Republican dominance in Washington rested on shaky supports. And when the panic on Wall Street in September 1873 ushered in a major industrial depression, the party foundation crumbled. In one of the greatest electoral reverses in history, Democrats regained the House of Representatives in 1874 by a hefty margin of 169-109, a party increase of 77 seats while the Republicans lost 85. The depression only deepened in the following years. As the United States approached its centennial, more than half the nation's railroads faced bankruptcy. Iron production plummeted and factory closings reached record numbers. Unemployed workers roamed from town to town looking for jobs. The "tramp" problem grabbed headlines nationwide as labor unrest exploded everywhere. The disappearance of Civil War issues coupled with hard times offered Democrats

their first real chance in a generation to capture the White House. Politicians of both parties knew that the election of 1876 would be the first closely-fought contest in recent memory. Every electoral vote would matter--even those of tiny California and Oregon. In the political vacuum caused by the fading of the war, both parties needed to redefine themselves by identifying with new issues and new causes. Anything to swing a vote--or swing a state--would be considered. Racial politics, which had proved effective in the past, would shortly be resurrected. However, the politics would not be white v. black, they would be Caucasian v. Chinese. The upcoming election would make 1876 the year that Chinese immigration became a national political issue for the first time.

NOTES

1. Senate Misc. Doc. No. 13, 41st Cong., 3rd sess.; Congressional Globe, 41st Cong., 3rd. sess., p. 52 (Dec. 12, 1870). On Sherman, see ibid., 41st Cong., 2nd sess., p. 5152 (July 4, 1870). On Thurman, see Cincinnati Gazette, Sept. 12, 1870, p. 2.
2. Congressional Globe, 41st Cong., 3rd sess., pp. 58 (Dec. 12, 1870), 88 (Dec. 13, 1870), 359 (Jan. 7, 1871).
3. See Alexander Saxton, The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California (Berkeley: University of California, 1971), ch. 4; New York Tribune, Aug. 7, 1871, p. 4.
4. For Mungen's speech, see Congressional Globe, 41st Cong., 3rd sess., pp. 351-60 (Jan. 7, 1871). The quotes are from pp. 351, 352, 353, 354.
5. Ibid., pp. 351, 352, 353, 354, 356.
6. Ibid., pp. 353, 357, 358, 359.
7. Ibid., p. 358.
8. Ibid., pp. 352, 359. The emphasis is mine. It is interesting that the exceptions Mungen proposed were ultimately incorporated into the Chinese Exclusion Act eleven years later.
9. The act stated that "a permit or certificate shall be prepared and signed by the consul or consular agent of the United States ... containing the name of such person, and setting forth the fact of his voluntary emigration ... but the same shall not be given until such consul or consular agent shall be first personally satisfied by evidence produced of the truth of the facts stated therein." (George P. Sanger, ed., The Statutes at Large, Treaties, and Proclamations, of the United States of America, From December 5, 1859, to March 3, 1863, XII (Boston, 1863), pp. 340-41.)
10. Doc. No. 43 in Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States Transmitted to Congress with the Annual Message of the President, December 4, 1871, Preceded by a Synoptical List of Papers and Followed by an Alphabetical Index of Persons and Subjects (Washington, 1871), pp. 207-10. The document is dated April 25, 1871. The quotes are from pp. 207, 208, 209.

11. Ibid., pp. 208, 209, 210.
12. Ibid., Doc. 47 [enclosure 430], pp. 220-21. The document is dated Sept. 11, 1871. The quote "Chinese broker" is from Registrar General Cecil S. Smith, Aug. 14, 1871, Doc. 47 [enclosure 74] in ibid., p. 220. For documents relating to Peru, see ibid., pp. 112-14, 210-19.
13. Ibid., Doc. 47 [enclosures 63 (Sept. 12, 1871), 74 (Aug. 14, 1871), 392 (Aug. 15, 1871), 430 (Sept. 11, 1871)], pp. 219-21.
14. Mary Roberts Coolidge, Chinese Immigration (New York, 1909), pp. 49-50, 13n.
15. Workingman's Advocate, Jan. 28, 1871, p. 2, Feb. 4, 1871, p. 2; New York Tribune, Feb. 3, 1871, p. 8.
16. Workingman's Advocate, Feb. 4, 1871, p. 3, April 29, 1871, p. 2; New York Times, April 25, 1871, p. 5. Mungen's speech appeared in Workingman's Advocate, Feb. 4, 1871, p. 1, Feb. 11, 1871, p. 1, Feb. 18, 1871, p. 3, Feb. 25, 1871, p. 1, March 4, 1871, p. 3, March 11, 1871, p. 3, March 18, 1871, p. 1.
17. New York Star, April 27, 1871, p. 1; New York Sun, Dec. 3, 1870, p. 2, Dec. 6, 1870, p. 1, Dec. 14, 1870, p. 2.
18. New York Star, April 22, 1871, pp. 2, 3; Workingman's Advocate, May 13, 1871, p. 2.
19. New York Star, April 22, 1871, p. 2, April 26, 1871, p. 1, April 27, 1871, p. 1; New York Herald, June 26, 1871; Workingman's Advocate, Sept. 23, 1871, p. 2; New York Times, April 22, 1871, p. 8. Cummings later became impoverished and died of consumption on March 9, 1874. He was 42 years old. (Workingman's Advocate, March 21, 1874, p. 2.)
20. New York Star, April 27, 1871, p. 1.
21. Ibid.; Irish World, April 29, 1871, p. 6. It is unclear if the Irish World was reporting on the same meeting as the New York Star. Regardless, the gist of Young's speech recorded in both newspapers was identical.
22. New York Star, April 27, 1871, p. 1; New York Times, April 27, 1871, p. 6.
23. Workingman's Advocate, Oct. 17, 1868, p. 2; W. Ellison Chalmers, "Andrew C. Cameron," Dictionary of American Biography, III (New York, 1929), pp. 433-34.

24. Workingman's Advocate, June 3, 1871, p. 1, Sept. 30, 1871, p. 4, Feb. 15, 1873, p. 3, June 21, 1873, p. 2, Oct. 11, 1873, p. 1; San Francisco Enterprise, reprinted in ibid., Aug. 24, 1872, p. 1. The first series appeared in ibid., Aug. 24, 1872, p. 1, Aug. 31, 1872, p. 2, Sept. 7, 1872, p. 2, Sept. 14, 1872, p. 2, Oct. 5, 1872, p. 2, Oct. 12, 1872, p. 3, Nov. 16, 1872, p. 2. The second series, more sporadic, began Oct. 11, 1873, p. 1.

25. Sam Booth, "They are Coming," Workingman's Advocate, Aug. 2, 1873, p. 1.

26. A fairly good run of the Workingman's Advocate exists on microfilm from 1866 to 1876. A few scattered issues remain from 1864, the year Cameron founded the journal, 1865, and 1877. The Iron Molders' Journal noted that the paper ceased publication in 1878, while the Dictionary of American Biography claims it ran until 1880. Cameron died in 1890 at age 55. (Iron Molders' Journal, July 1, 1878, p. 194; Chalmers, "Andrew C. Cameron," pp. 433-34.)

27. Workingman's Advocate, Nov. 5 & Dec. 2, 1871, p. 4. On Troup, see chapter 1.

28. Workingman's Advocate, Nov. 19, 1870, p. 2; D.S. Curtiss (letter, Washington, D.C., Nov. 24, 1870) in ibid., Dec. 3, 1870, p. 2.

29. Workingman's Advocate, June 1, 1872, p. 2, Aug. 24, 1872, p. 2, Dec. 21, 1872, p. 2, Oct. 4, 1873, p. 2.

30. Workingman's Advocate, May 25, 1872, p. 1. On the New York City general strike, see Montgomery, Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans, 1862-1872, pp. 326-34; and Iver Bernstein, The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War (New York: Oxford, 1990), ch. 7.

31. Proceedings of the Eleventh Session of the Iron Molders' International Union in Convention Assembled, at Troy, N.Y., July 10, 1872 (Cincinnati: Robert Clarke, 1872), pp. 16-18, 60.

32. Iron Molders' International Journal, Sept. 30, 1872, pp. 7-8; John Fraser, Secretary of the Associated Iron Molders of Scotland, to Saffin (letter, Glasgow, Oct. 12, 1872), reprinted in ibid., Oct. 31, 1872, p. 5. See also ibid., March 31, 1873, p. 3, April 30, 1873, p. 8. With the amendments noted above, English iron workers approved the agreement overwhelmingly, 4,503-42. (Ibid., Oct. 31, 1872, p. 3.)

33. Iron Molders' International Journal, June 30, 1873, p. 9.

34. Iron Molders' Journal, Oct. 10, 1874, p. 65. See also Iron Molders' International Journal, Oct. 31, 1872, p. 5; Cincinnati Gazette, quoted in ibid., June 30, 1873, p. 5; Iron Molders' Journal, Nov. 10, 1874, p. 98. (Both the Iron Molders' International Union and the Iron Molders' International Journal dropped the word "international" from their names in 1874. Iron workers were lobbying Congress to incorporate the union and lawmakers frowned on the word "international.")

35. Allegheny Mail, reprinted in New York Herald, Sept. 27, 1874, p. 17; Herbert G. Gutman, "The Workers' Search for Power in the Gilded Age," in Power & Culture: Essays on the American Working Class, Ira Berlin ed. (New York: Pantheon, 1987), pp. 90-91; Pittsburgh Leader, reprinted in Workingman's Advocate, Oct. 3 & 10, 1874, p. 1. On violence in the coal fields, see Grace Palladino, Another Civil War: Labor, Capital, and the State in the Anthracite Regions of Pennsylvania, 1840-68 (Urbana, Ill.: University of Chicago, 1990).

36. Allegheny Mail, reprinted in New York Herald, September. 27, 1874, p. 17; Pittsburgh Leader, reprinted in Workingman's Advocate, October. 3 & 10, 1874, p. 1; New York Tribune, Sept. 28, 1874, p. 1; John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns of American Nativism, 1860-1925 (New York: Atheneum, 1975; first published 1955), p. 48.

37. Anthony F.C. Wallace, St. Clair: A Nineteenth-Century Coal Town's Experience with a Disaster-Prone Industry (Ithaca: Cornell, 1987), p. 338; Iron Molders' Journal, Nov. 10, 1874, pp. 104-05; Workingman's Advocate, Oct. 3 & 10, 1874, p. 2; Pittsburgh Leader, reprinted in Workingman's Advocate, October. 3 & 10, 1874, p. 1.

The Pittsburgh American Working People noted a month later that many of the "imported Italian roughs" had returned to New York "and others are wishing to do so." The mine-owners disliked their "turbulent character" and the Italians grumbled over wages. "Dissatisfactions," the paper noted, "seem to have been mutual...." (Pittsburgh American Working People, quoted in Miners' National Record, Nov. 1874, p. 9.)

38. Herbert G. Gutman, "Labor in the Land of Lincoln: Coal Miners on the Prairie," in Gutman, Power & Culture, pp. 150-56, 175-85; Workingman's Advocate, Oct. 24, 1874, p. 2; Allegheny Mail, reprinted in New York Herald, September. 27, 1874, p. 17; Higham, Strangers in the Land, pp. 47-48.

39. Iron Molders' International Journal, Jan. 31, 1873, p. 10, June 30, 1873, p. 409; New York Times, Dec. 13, 1872, p. 1; Pittsburgh Commercial, reprinted in ibid., Aug. 25, 1872, p. 6, Dec. 13, 1872, p. 1; House Misc. Doc. No. 81, 42nd Cong., 3rd sess., "Petition of the Citizens of Beaver County, Pennsylvania, Relative to Chinese Laborers," Feb. 3, 1873; W.J.N. (letter, Beaver Falls, Pa., Aug. 18, 1872) in New York Tribune, Aug. 27, 1872, p. 8.
40. Iron Molders' International Journal, Jan. 31, 1873, p. 10, June 30, 1873, p. 409, Sept. 30, 1873, p. 114; Iron Molders' Journal, Sept. 10, 1874, p. 52; Workingman's Advocate, Feb. 15, 1873, p. 2, June 21, 1873, p. 2, Aug. 1, 1874, p. 3.
41. Workingman's Advocate, May 10, 1873, p. 2, May 24, 1873, p. 2, Feb. 20, 1875, p. 2.
42. Ibid., Nov. 29, 1873, p. 1.
43. Ibid., Sept. 7, 1872, Oct. 4, 1873, p. 2, March 28, 1874, p. 2.
44. The best source for the meetings is the Workingman's Advocate, May 23, 1874, pp. 2-3, May 30, 1874, p. 2, June 6, 1874, pp. 2, 4, June 13, 1874, p. 3. See also Boston Globe, May 19, 1874, p. 4; Cincinnati Gazette, May 19, 1874, May 20, 1874; New York World, May 19, 1874, p. 5; Washington Star, May 19, 1874, p. 4; New York Toiler, May 23, 1874, p. 1. The quotes by Ward are from New York World, May 19, 1874, p. 5; New York Tribune, May 19, 1874, p. 3; New York Sun, May 19, 1874, p. 3. Ward was an old colleague of Cameron. See Montgomery, Beyond Equality, p. 415. On the Tompkins Square incident, see Herbert G. Gutman, "The Tompkins Square 'Riot' in New York City on January 13, 1874: A Reexamination of Its Causes and Its Aftermath," Labor History (1965), pp. 44-83.
45. Workingman's Advocate, May 30, 1874, p. 2.
46. Ibid., Feb. 8, 1873, p. 2.
47. Ibid., Aug. 19, 1871, p. 1. Trevellick repeated his pro-immigration/anti-importation stance at a National Labor Union meeting the following year. (Ibid., Sept. 21, 1872, p. 2.)
48. Ibid., March 2, 1872, p. 1; March 16, 1872, p. 2; Hartford Labor Journal, reprinted in ibid., April 27, 1872, p. 1.

49. Cameron quoted in Montgomery, Beyond Equality, p. 194. On the N.L.U.'s foray into presidential politics and its subsequent collapse, see ibid., pp. 192-96, 404-09. The candidate selected by the National Labor Reform Party was Supreme Court Justice David B. Davis who hoped the nomination would boost his chances for a spot on the Democratic or Liberal Republican tickets. When this failed to materialize Davis withdrew, leaving the party stillborn. In the crazy election year of 1872, one can only speculate what may have happened had the Labor Reformers selected a different candidate, such as Wendell Phillips whose name had been placed in nomination at the convention by delegate Samuel P. Cummings. (Workingman's Advocate, March 2, 1872, p. 4.)

50. Workingman's Advocate, July 19, 1873, p. 2, July 26, 1873, p. 3.

51. Workingman's Advocate, April 25, 1874, p. 4, April 24, 1875, p. 2.

52. Higham, Strangers in the Land, pp. 49-50.

53. Congressional Globe, 42nd Cong., 1st sess., p. 78 (March 13, 1871); ibid., 42nd Cong., 2nd sess., pp. 1581 (March 11, 1872), 1737-41 (March 16, 1872); ibid., 42nd Cong., 3rd sess., pp. 450 (Jan. 9, 1873), 1295 (Feb. 12, 1873); Congressional Record, 43rd Cong., 1st sess., pp. 716 (Jan. 16, 1874), 1463-64 (Feb. 13, 1874).

54. Ira B. Cross, A History of the Labor Movement in California (Berkeley: University of California, 1935), quoted in Saxton, The Indispensable Enemy, p. 104; San Francisco Examiner, April 29, 1873, reprinted in Workingman's Advocate, June 7, 1873, p. 4; San Francisco Shop Senate, July 5, 1873, reprinted in Workingman's Advocate, Aug. 2, 1873, p. 1.

55. Annual Message of Ulysses S. Grant, Dec. 7, 1874, in James D. Richardson, A Compilation of the Messages and Papers of the Presidents, IX (New York, 1897), p. 4242.

56. Congressional Record, 43rd Cong., 2nd sess., pp. 19 (Dec. 8, 1874), 1599 (Feb. 22, 1875), 2161 (March 3, 1875).

57. Kirk H. Porter and Donald Bruce Johnson, National Party Platforms, 1840-1968 (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois, 1970), pp. 41-48. The Democratic and Liberal Republican platforms differed only in punctuation and grammar. Other parties--the Straight-Out (anti-Greeley) Democrats, the Labor Reformers, and the Prohibitionists--also issued platforms and nominated candidates, and feminist

Victoria Woodhull became the first woman to run for president. These minor parties further helped make 1872 an unusual election year but they had little impact on the outcome.

CHAPTER 5

"TO OVERCOME THE APATHY OF NATIONAL LEGISLATORS": THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN OF 1876

"We are on the eve of a presidential election, and both parties are looking toward this coast for aid."

--Andrew J. Bryant, Mayor of
San Francisco, March 22, 1876

On an early summer day in June 1876, Philip Augustine Roach entered the stately residence of Samuel J. Tilden on Grammercy Park in Manhattan. Roach was a California State Senator and editor of the San Francisco Examiner. Tilden, the popular reform governor of New York, was on the verge of being nominated for president by the Democratic party, whose national convention was less than a week away. After a private conversation they were joined by Manton Marble, editor of the New York World, and an influential Democratic leader. Roach's message was simple and direct: He wanted Tilden and the Democratic party to adopt the issue of Chinese exclusion for the presidential campaign. "Treat this question well," Roach advised Marble, "and Mr. Tilden can get, as he desires, the Pacific Delegation." Chinese exclusion, he explained, was an ideal campaign issue. "[P]roperly treated," he added, it "will rally the workingman to our support where the mongolians have secured a lodgment." Roach did not need to press his point hard.

Tilden agreed to his suggestion and at the meeting's conclusion Marble drafted an anti-Chinese resolution that would shortly appear in the party's platform. "[A]nd thus commenced in Mr. Tilden's own studio," Roach noted four years later with evident satisfaction, "the action which made opposition to Coolieism a national Democratic issue."¹

This meeting, and the year 1876 itself, marked a turning point in the anti-Chinese movement. After years as a local issue on the West Coast that had drawn only sporadic interest in the East, politicians attempted to portray Chinese immigration as a national emergency. With little instigation from workers, union leaders, or any other group east of the Rocky Mountains, politicians seized--one might say created--the issue of Chinese exclusion in the quest for votes. Republicans actually took the initiative, both in California and nationally, but Democrats caught up quickly and pushed the issue more vigorously. Both major parties wrote anti-Chinese planks into their national campaign platforms in 1876 and many a politician jockeyed, in Roach's words, "to set himself right on the Chinese question." Such posturing, however, yielded few rewards initially. Despite all the politicians' efforts and all the politicians' rhetoric, they could not make Chinese immigration a matter of national importance to workers or to voters. Chinese immigration remained in the background, overshadowed by the dying embers of reconstruction. The time and the purpose

for such an issue had not yet arrived, nor would they until major class conflicts became front-page news. The time, however, was not far off. Class upheavals of the late 1870s would not only bloody workers and soldiers, they would shock the nation and provide the vital ammunition politicians needed to buttress the arguments of their campaign to restrict Chinese immigration. The centennial year set the stage for that campaign.

The winter of 1875-76 gave little indication that Chinese immigration would become a national political issue, much less a plank of each party's platform. The 44th Congress, which met for its opening session in December, appeared apathetic on the subject as politicians remained preoccupied with resolving the festering problems of reconstruction. Workers, however, had other priorities. Foremost among these were coping with the unemployment and poverty caused by the depression. In the largest labor convention of the year, 132 delegates gathered in Tyrone, Pennsylvania in the last week of December to write a platform that included such planks as a graduated income tax, expanded money supply, direct election of the president, and abolition of government subsidies to corporations and railroads. Chinese immigration never surfaced. Delegates planned to hold a larger convention the

following April in the hopes of unifying the nation's disparate labor organizations.²

The depression remained the dominant issue on the working-class agenda in the opening months of 1876. A mass meeting held in New York City in January under the auspices of the bricklayers and other trades unions featured many speakers. Enumerating the rights of labor and the wrongs perpetrated against workingmen, speakers denounced politicians of both parties for failing the nation's wage-earners. They called on Congress to create public works to alleviate unemployment but asked nothing more from the federal government. The Iron Molders Union of North America, with locals across the Northeast and Midwest, also petitioned Congress for aid, but only to receive a charter of incorporation, not to create jobs or pass other legislation. Chinese immigration remained unmentioned.³

A wave of strikes in March--called by tailors, printers, shoemakers, and bricklayers--led to a packed meeting at Cooper Union in New York City where workers, according to the New York Herald, discussed "the present aspect of the labor question." Members of each trade described reasons for the strikes and suggested remedies the government could implement. Michael Murphy, for example, the Knights of St. Crispin leader who called the meeting to order, related that shoemakers walked out after an employer imported five laborers to New York from Boston. When more

strikebreakers were brought in, Crispins confronted them on the street, a scuffle ensued, and police arrested four strikers. They were indicted for breaking the Conspiracy Law of 1834. At the meeting, workers circulated a petition urging repeal of the forty-two-year-old statute. Other speakers included tailor Robert Blissert who counseled arbitration and cooperation to solve industrial conflicts, his colleagues John Fortune who criticized Brooks Brothers for refusing to hire union workers, and printer Hugh Dalton who denounced a convict labor bill recently passed by the state legislature. It was wrong, Dalton said, "teaching thieves the trades that honest men spend years in learning." Better that the legislature "establish law schools in the prisons," he added, so that convicts could compete with lawyers and lawmakers. Workers at the meeting endorsed a series of resolutions on the above subjects as well as one that repudiated low wages "as an attempt to destroy the status of the American laborer and reduce him to the level of the disfranchised masses of monarchical governments." Imported labor and cheap wages--the two features workers had long associated with the Chinese--received extended treatment at this New York meeting. But no one mentioned the Chinese. Nor did a delegation of blacksmiths, horseshoers, jewelers, and bricklayers when during the same week in March they questioned a local politician for his views on issues "of great importance to thousands of

mechanics and laborers." In the winter of 1876, the issue of Chinese immigration was not on the working-class agenda. In contrast to depressions before the Civil War, workers refrained from scapegoating immigrants or blaming foreigners for the hard times. The lingering impact of Civil War ideals and the large foreign-born composition of the work force tempered xenophobic outbursts from workers in the 1870s.⁴

Workers were hardly unique in their disinterest in nativism and the Chinese. Aside from a handful of Protestant missionary organizations, few groups discussed the subject. One unusual exception, however, was the Order of United American Mechanics, a cross-class organization founded in 1845 by masters and journeymen, which had gained a wide following among workers. Fiercely nativist, the Order had banned members born overseas--or even "on the seas"--and spread its xenophobic message throughout the North. Along with anti-foreigner legislation, leaders advocated temperance reform and a harmony of interests between employer and employee, all strands that would find their way into the Know-Nothing movement and then the Republican party. The Order's evolution during the 1860s and 1870s is largely unknown, but a meeting at Cooper Union on Washington's Birthday 1876 suggests the group developed attitudes incongruous with its image. Listeners, one-third of them "ladies," heard one speaker lavish praise on

"foreigners who had done so much in behalf of liberty." He singled out Revolutionary War heroes Lafayette, Kosciusko, Von Steuben, and Marion. Another speaker lauded the French, Italian, Irish, and German immigrant for coming to America to seek the "manhood which he could not find at home." Saluting "religious equality, political equality and social equality, all of which ... meant true Americanism," the same orator stated: "All religions must be tolerated so long as they did not cross that of another. The Chinaman had just as much right to his peculiar kind of worship as anybody else so long as the laws of the country were complied with."⁵ Popular nativism, it appears, had, at least momentarily, done an about-face. Support for foreigners--even Chinese--could earn plaudits. But such mentions, pro or con, remained comparatively rare. The Chinese were still of negligible concern to people in the East.

But not for long: California politicians were gearing up for a major assault on the rest of the nation in hopes of changing this climate of indifference. In March the California State Republican Committee published a resolution demanding modification of the Burlingame Treaty to permit the restriction of Chinese immigration. The Democrats at once tried to steal their thunder. San Francisco Mayor Andrew Jackson Bryant issued a long statement on the "evils" of Chinese immigration, and (the same week that striking workers were rallying in New York City) he suggested

national legislation to "restrain the present influx." Bryant urged San Francisco's Board of Supervisors to appoint a special committee to recommend immediate action. The response throughout the West to Bryant's request was enthusiastic and overwhelming. Anti-Chinese sentiment had been building in California for a long time. Growing numbers of Chinese immigrants over the preceding three years--the largest annual influxes since 1852--augmented by the depression just reaching its nadir in 1876, contributed to an increasingly hostile atmosphere. Anti-coolie clubs, with members from all classes, had sprouted up everywhere in the West. Bryant directed the special committee to draw up a long list of grievances relating to Chinese immigration and have them endorsed by a giant public rally. "I have no doubt," he told the committee, "that the largest mass meeting ever held on the Coast can be gathered when its objects are made known." The mayor also wanted this list of grievances taken to Washington and a million copies circulated throughout the country. The committee heartily agreed and began planning the demonstration. Organizers urged prominent citizens to speak, and even rescheduled the meeting so that the governor could attend. To emphasize the issue's widespread appeal, they "urgently recommended that the people in every town, village and hamlet throughout the Coast" hold similar meetings.⁶

The day of the demonstrations was a rousing success. And Mayor Bryant was right: the San Francisco gathering was the largest the Pacific Coast had ever seen. Twenty-five thousand people assembled on April 5, 1876, to hear the state's leading citizens denounce the Chinese with vicious, racist attacks. The governor, the lieutenant-governor, and an ex-governor addressed the crowd, and were followed by numerous public officials and local businessmen. One of them was Philip A. Roach. Chinese immigration, he stated, must be stopped. Governor William Irwin agreed. "We must do it," he told the cheering crowd, "by urging a sufficient number of members of Congress, and by urging the Executive Department of the United States ... [to] secure a modification of our treaty relations with the Chinese Empire." To assure success, the governor stated, the West Coast must rouse "public opinion on the other side of the continent."⁷

The California State Senate had the same idea. On April 3, two days before the mass meeting, the State Senate authorized an investigation of the impact of Chinese immigration on the Pacific Coast. Senators aimed to determine "the effect their presence has upon the social and political condition of the State," and to recommend the "means of exclusion." Lawmakers evidently had little doubt of the conclusions investigators would reach, and authorized copies of the testimony and report be sent to all the

"leading newspapers of the United States," as well as five each to every member of Congress, and two thousand for general distribution. Rousing public opinion in the East and Midwest remained the underlying goal. The State Senate wasted no time appointing a committee, and the investigation got underway a week later. From April 11 to mid-June, the senators held fifteen sessions and heard testimony from sixty witnesses, including former Governor F.F. Low, clothing manufacturer Levi Strauss, and eighteen Chinese immigrants. The eighteen immigrants revealed little but many of the white witnesses presented "evidence" of Chinese treachery. The report ultimately adopted by the State Senate called the Chinese slaves, prostitutes, and "the dregs of the population." California lawmakers urged Congress to repeal the Burlingame Treaty and limit the number of incoming Chinese immigrants to ten per ship.⁸

California politicians tried everything. In June the San Francisco Board of Supervisors even passed a law--the so-called "queue ordinance"--to inhibit the Chinese hairstyle in hopes it would check immigration.⁹ But such piecemeal efforts were ineffective and politicians knew it. Their only real hope for immigration restriction lay with the federal government, and all eyes looked to Washington for "relief." It was no accident that the mass meetings and the senate investigation occurred when they did. The national nominating conventions were around the corner and

the presidential canvass only months away. If Washington was to respond, this was the time. "We are on the eve of a presidential election," Mayor Bryant had proclaimed in March, "and both parties are looking toward this coast for aid." The local press backed him up. "[T]he session of Congress preceding a Presidential election," the San Francisco Bulletin noted, "is the most promising. The Democratic House ... will not be disposed to throw away the votes of the Pacific States.... The Republican Senate will be likely to be swayed by precisely the same motive." In thus holding out the bait of electoral votes, California hoped to lure politicians thousands of miles away to its cause. To publicize this bait and the sentiment of the Pacific Coast, Californians continued to hold huge anti-Chinese meetings throughout the spring. To top everything off, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted to send a delegation to Washington to excite anti-Chinese sentiment in the East and to deliver to Congress the list of grievances endorsed by the mass meeting in April. On May 8, the Board authorized \$5,000 to cover the delegation's traveling expenses, a sum, one official remarked, that could have been raised privately in less than two hours. The delegation consisted of three politicians: Frank M. Pixley, Mark L. McDonald, and the distinguished statesman Philip Augustine Roach.¹⁰

Philip A. Roach was born in Ireland in 1820. His family moved to New York in 1822 and he was later educated by private tutors and at private schools. At age fourteen he became a clerk in a large importing house and began his career as a merchant. A man of varied interests, he served briefly as editor of the Vicksburg, Mississippi Sentinel and then traveled to Europe and studied at the University of Paris. In 1846 President Polk appointed him U.S. Consul to Portugal. Roach was twenty-six years old. He resigned three years later in 1849 and moved to California. Settling in Monterey, the "Forty-Niner" returned to commercial pursuits, and quickly became one of the new state's most prominent citizens. He helped frame California's first constitution, and was elected judge and then mayor of Monterey. As a state senator in 1852, Roach wrote one of the earliest reports against Chinese immigration. Over the next two decades he held numerous government and philanthropic offices and in 1867 bought an interest in the San Francisco Examiner. A fine speaker with "gentleman-like instincts," a biographer later called him one of the "advocates of truth and the cause of the people." Well connected with politicians and men of commerce, he was an ideal choice to lead the city's anti-Chinese delegation.¹¹

Roach embarked on his trip to the East in May. He stopped first in Chicago where he engaged a lecture hall and distributed 5,000 handbills around the city. Five hundred

people showed up to hear Roach attack the "coolie system" as "slavery and peonage." He described in detail how the Chinese "drove out competition" in every field they entered. "Thousands of Spanish and American cigar-makers," Roach declared, "were thrown out of work by the Chinaman." So were fishermen, servants, and shoemakers. "The Chinaman worked longer and cheaper than the white man," and thus crowded out "honest labor." But job competition was not the only issue. "The question of labor and money was the least among them," he said. The Chinese "brought diseases with them," such as leprosy, small pox, and those sexually transmitted. They were also "fearful liars" and "opposed to the manners and customs of the [American] people." He elaborated on Chinese prostitution, vice, and criminality, and strongly urged his listeners to support his mission to end Chinese immigration to the United States.¹²

A week later the Workingman's Advocate reported that Roach's lecture "was well received." But apparently not well enough. The Californian "had hoped for a larger audience," he said during his address, and his Chicago lecture was to be his last. Switching tactics, Roach appealed to the press rather than face audiences. As he traveled on to Philadelphia, New York, Albany, Buffalo, Cincinnati, and St. Louis, he spoke mainly to reporters, not to workers or citizens at large. His strategy was to grant interviews, provide copy, and persuade journalists to publish articles reflecting his position. Thus in each city

he visited he went straight to the offices of the "leading papers" and parleyed with editors. So did his colleague Frank Pixley. "I hope to enlist leading journals in our cause," Pixley wrote in June. "I shall hope to impress them favorably and get aid." Pixley also urged newspapers back home to step up the pressure. "The press should cry aloud," he advised, "and no public opportunity should be allowed to pass without pushing this question." Pixley's message seemed to be falling on sympathetic ears. E.L. Godkin of The Nation, for example, printed a venomous anti-Chinese letter while Roach was in town. A month earlier, in light of the anti-Chinese activity on the West Coast, Godkin had begun to worry about the "influx of a horde of barbarians" into the U.S. "The picture drawn by Fourth-of-July orators of the welcome which the United States offers the 'poor and oppressed of every land,'" Godkin wrote, "is somewhat out of date." Roach and Pixley's strategy seemed to be working. They gained "lengthy reviews" and "editorial notions" in major dailies throughout the East and Midwest. Their deliberate, well-planned campaign rolled along smoothly, and they continued to follow the same rhetorical approach Roach had set out in Chicago: while directing their message to the working classes, they tailored their arguments so that they would be acceptable to all segments of society.¹³

Most everyone responded favorably. Venturing beyond the editorial rooms of the press, Roach made one more well-

publicized appearance at the end of his trip. This was in New York City where he was feted at the Sturtevant House by the Associated Pioneers of the Territorial Days of California. Numerous "prominent citizens" attended the full-dress banquet and delivered testimonials to the New York boy who had made good. Those that could not attend, such as Civil War generals William T. Sherman and John Hooker, as well as former crony Mark Twain, sent letters of support and congratulation. Among the many speakers celebrating Roach's accomplishments, one in particular praised him for alerting the East to the "dangers" of Chinese immigration. The orator saluted Roach for his efforts "to exclude this useless addition to our population." Roach had made a hit. A week later the "Pioneer of California" presented his case to the Connecticut legislature in Hartford and urged them to back his cause. The lawmakers, he wrote, responded favorably. Roach's audiences extended well beyond the working classes.¹⁴

Roach received favorable publicity everywhere he went but generated his biggest sensation in Washington where he hammered out his message directly to the nation's leaders, meeting with President Grant and each member of his Cabinet. He also met with influential senators and testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee where he presented the list of grievances endorsed by the San Francisco mass

meeting. Pixley testified with him, as well as to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. He met with Grant--three times--and stressed the dangers of ongoing Chinese immigration. "I have found no public man (not from our coast)," Pixley wrote a colleague in San Francisco, "who is more alive to the importance of the subject or more anxious to give us prompt relief." Pixley claimed that the President, the Attorney General, and several other members of the Cabinet "agree upon one point, viz: The necessity of qualifying those clauses of the Burlingame treaty that now permit unlimited emigration."¹⁵

Despite their immediate impact, Roach and Pixley represented but a fraction of the anti-Chinese onslaught during the spring of 1876. West Coast senators and representatives also played a key role in this campaign and pushed harder and harder for anti-Chinese legislation as the Congressional session wore on. As early as January, Representative John K. Luttrell [D-CA] introduced a bill to prevent the naturalization of Chinese immigrants. A month later Senator Newton Booth [R-CA] presented a resolution from the state legislature urging modification of the Burlingame Treaty. Both measures died in committee. In April, however, the House of Representatives adopted without a vote a resolution submitted Horace Page [R-CA] requesting the president to open treaty negotiations with China.

Republican Aaron A. Sargent, California's senior senator, offered a similar resolution in the Senate and asked if he might make a few observations on the subject before his colleagues voted. They consented, and on May 1, less than a month after the wave of anti-Chinese meetings had swept California, while the state legislature was conducting its investigation, and on the eve of Roach and Pixley's visit east, Senator Sargent launched into one of the most vicious attacks on Chinese immigration that the Senate had ever heard.¹⁶

"The emigration of Chinese," Sargent declared, "is not like that of Europeans who seek our shores voluntarily to become citizens. All the evidence tends to prove that the mass of the Chinese who come here are coolies, bound for service for terms of years at exorbitant rates. They are quasi slaves." How could free workers compete, he asked, with those who can "work for half the prevailing wages?" "The Chinaman is a constant threat to the unskilled laborer," he stated, "and is gradually becoming a threat even to the skilled laborer." They were taking over shoemaking, cigarmaking, and countless other trades. "Chinese population expels all better kinds.... The white and the negro, the American, Frenchman, and Spaniard all seek residence and places of business elsewhere. Even the lowest classes of society flee away." With unrestricted Chinese immigration, he warned, San Francisco could become

"a purely Asiatic city." Sargent then pictured what such a city would be like based on reports he had read about Chinatown. Nothing escaped his notice: the crowded living quarters, the hidden opium dens, the vice, the corruption, and the "plague-breeding nuisances," even "the horrid screech of the Chinese fiddle." He compared such scenes to Tom-all-alone's, the famous slum in Dickens's Bleak House, but claimed that nothing the novelist had depicted approached the squalor of Chinatown. "Even his pen," Sargent remarked, "would fail to do justice to the Chinese alleys in San Francisco ... reeking with the slime of nastiness...." In similar manner he described "Donovan's Alley," part of the fledgling Chinese community in lower Manhattan. The Chinese, he intimated, were coming east from California and would soon be everywhere spreading their habits and institutions. Was this the type of society that Americans wanted?

If a community is built up by such industry, it is not as a New England or western village is built up. It is Foo Chow, and not Cedar Rapids; it is Donovan Alley, and not Broadway; it is the hovel and not the home; the joss-house and not the church; it is not republican; it is not civilization....¹⁷

Sargent pulled few punches in his assault on the Chinese. They were "perjurers" and "prostitutes," indifferent to human life. The U.S. had no use for "this strange and dangerously unassimilative people." Senator Sargent, a native of Massachusetts and a Forty-Niner like Roach, had been a Radical Republican and defender of black

suffrage and political rights. But now, he confessed to his colleagues, he was no longer blinded by the ideals of his youth. He urged his fellow citizens to abandon the "humanist view" of equality forged in the fires of Civil War and emancipation. Lawmakers during Reconstruction had been "too emotional" when dealing with racial problems. In seeking to promote human equality, he stated, "We looked too much to the sentimental side...." But those days were over. It was time now for Congress to take action. "There can be no remedy but general exclusion...."¹⁸

The United States Senate had never in its history witnessed such a fusillade of anti-Chinese rhetoric. "'Sargent's speech,'" a San Francisco reporter telegraphed from Washington, "'... has excited much interest here. Congressional sentiment on the question is awakened under such efforts and discussion[s] by the California Press ... have seemed to startle the public mind into a more careful examination and review of the whole subject.'" The bombardment continued two weeks later when Senator John H. Mitchell [R-OR] matched his colleague in vituperation. "Perhaps ... no question of greater import could be presented to the consideration of the American Senate," Mitchell stated, than Chinese immigration. A "festering sore" and "plague-spot," he remarked, it "menaces ... the stability and purity of our moral peace." Chinese immigrants threatened to "contaminate and blast our

civilization with the degrading tendencies of ... darkness and heathenism." Fearing "neither God nor conscience," the Chinese were coming by the thousands, bringing "ignorance, and poverty, and crime, pestilence, moral, social, political, in their most alarming and dreaded forms."¹⁹

Across the hall in the House, Representative William A. Piper [D-CA] was equally graphic in stressing the dangers of a different race and foreign culture. Speaking two days later, Piper contrasted the "new ... superior Anglo-American" breed with "the semi-civilized yellow race, the savage African, and the perishing red man." After a discourse on racial characteristics, Piper explained that the Chinese were "grossly superstitious." They were

practical atheists, determined suicides, and systematic infanticides. They do not observe any weekly day of rest, and, in their worship, beat gongs, ring bells, explode fire-crackers, and burn paper petitions. They use praying-machines and expend immense sums in the repair of temples and in the purchase of idols in which they do not believe.

China, he intoned, was "a semi-barbarous infidel nation," the very "symbol of bigoted exclusiveness." Their language possessed so many characters that to acquire an education there "is valueless." Republican Senator Mitchell and Democratic Representative Piper both went on at length echoing the same points made by Sargent earlier in the month. They noted but minimized the distinction between immigration and importation. The West Coast politicians called for two immediate steps: a Congressional

investigation into the matter and a new treaty with China. These were only preludes, however, to their demand, in Mitchell's words, for the "absolute prohibition of the Chinese immigration."²⁰

The four-pronged attack orchestrated by Western politicians--ongoing and well-publicized anti-Chinese demonstrations on the Pacific Coast, the California State Senate investigation, the Roach delegation east, and didactic orations in Congress--bore instant fruit not in Washington but in Cincinnati. On June 14 (the same day San Francisco passed its queue ordinance), more than seven hundred Republicans gathered in Ohio's "queen city" for their national convention. The leading candidate, former House Speaker James G. Blaine of Maine, seemed destined for the nomination until allegations surfaced that he had accepted bribes from railroad companies. The popular Maine Republican had never commented publicly on Chinese immigration. His four leading challengers--Senator Oliver P. Morton of Indiana, Treasury Secretary Benjamin Bristow of Kentucky, Senator Roscoe Conkling of New York, and Governor Rutherford B. Hayes of Ohio--had said scarcely anything on the subject. Nor had Chinese immigration ever made its way into a major party's national campaign platform. But on the convention's opening day, venerable Republican Joseph R. Hawley of Connecticut--who had squarely endorsed importation and immigration in his debate with Ben Butler on July 4,

1870--read aloud to the delegates the list of resolutions that he and the platform committee had framed. "It is the immediate duty of Congress," Hawley read, "fully to investigate the effects of the immigration and importation of Mongolians on the moral and material interests of the country."²¹

A debate erupted that lasted nearly an hour. Edward L. Pierce, a Massachusetts delegate, called the resolution "discrimination of race" and wanted it stricken from the platform. "I denounce ... that resolution as a departure from the life and memory of Abraham Lincoln," he said. "I denounce it as a departure from every Republican platform adopted by every Republican national convention." Pierce called it anti-Christian and against the Declaration of Independence. "It is not," he said, "the doctrine of New England." Other Republicans rose in defense of the resolution. Nevada Senator John P. Jones described Chinese immigration as an "invasion ... worse than the plague of locusts," for the Chinese were a dishonest, vice-ridden "brutalized people" whose "very language ... has degenerated into a libidinous slang." Others endorsing the resolution included James B. Belford, soon to be Colorado's first representative in Congress, Samuel B. Axtell of New Mexico, and Silas B. Dutcher of Brooklyn, a lifelong Republican who had chaired the New York Young Men's Republican Committee for Lincoln in 1860. The measure was put to a vote and passed overwhelmingly, 532-215, 71% in favor. Westerners

approved almost unanimously (42-2), but the vast majority of support came from the East. All 58 Pennsylvanians voted in favor, and the combined vote of Republicans from the Northeast and Midwest was 325 (71%) to 133 (29%)--the same proportion as the convention at large. And although the anti-Chinese plank may not have been "the doctrine of New England," delegates from the five states split almost evenly on the vote. In the end, the San Francisco Alta California noted, the anti-Chinese plank was "adopted amid loud cheers." The New York Tribune called it "a necessary tub thrown to the anti-Chinese whale on the Pacific coast, without which the delegates from the States on that coast were fearful that they could give the Republican nominee no electoral votes." True enough. But as the New York Witness commented, "The Republican party, as represented by the Cincinnati Convention, regards the Chinaman as the Democratic party does the African, namely, to be excluded from equal opportunities with the white man." The ideals of the Civil War--the very basis of Reconstruction--were indeed fading: Principle could be sacrificed in pursuit of the presidency. Republican politicians were learning to play the politics of racism.²²

It was one week later that Philip Roach met in New York City with Samuel Tilden and Manton Marble. Spurred on by Republican endorsement of the issue, Roach pressed them to

insert an even stronger plank into the Democratic platform. So did Andrew J. Bryant. "I desire respectfully," the San Francisco mayor wrote Marble privately on June 17, "to call your attention to the necessity of having engrafted in the Democratic Platform ... strong and unequivocal Anti-Chinese Resolutions." These efforts were reinforced by several West Coast delegates to the Democratic Convention, which met in St. Louis later in the month. Californians J.L. English and John S. Hagar both emphasized that "our delegation is united" on placing an anti-Chinese plank in the platform and that their choice for a candidate "will be in some measure guided ... by the all-important Mongolian question." Nevada delegates joined with them and were not disappointed. Denouncing the policy which "tolerates the revival of the coolie-trade in Mongolian women for immoral purposes, and Mongolian men held to perform servile labor contracts," the Democratic party resolved to "demand such modification of the treaty with the Chinese Empire, or such legislation within constitutional limitations, as shall prevent further importation or immigration of the Mongolian race." Delegates greeted the plank with shouts of "'Good!' 'Bully!' and cheers."²³

Democrats were thus more emphatic than the Republicans, but both parties were now on record in favor of some legislation hostile to Chinese immigration. The momentum from the national conventions quickly propelled Congress

into action. On July 6 the Senate passed a resolution pledging to "investigate the character, extent, and effect of Chinese immigration to this country." The Republicans could now claim they were already making good on their campaign promises. The House passed the same resolution eleven days later, 186-14 (with 86 members not voting), and the two branches created a Joint Select Committee to investigate Chinese immigration. This committee, authorized the same month the United States celebrated its 100th birthday, would begin its hearings in San Francisco in the fall.²⁴

West Coast politicians had scored their first victory. Coming from virtually nowhere, they had turned a local concern into a national issue in a matter of months. Pixley himself stated that upon his arrival in the East in May he had "found great ignorance and great indifference about the Chinese matter in Washington." The San Francisco Chronicle agreed, and banked on Roach, Pixley, and West Coast Congressmen "to overcome the apathy with which national legislators ... regard the whole subject." After the Republicans had adopted their platform, the Chronicle noted that the anti-Chinese plank "is all that the people of this coast could have reasonably expected in the present state of the agitation of that question. The whole subject is new to the people of the East." Editorial after editorial in the Chronicle harped on the ignorance of most Americans

concerning the Chinese. "The people of the East," it wrote, "know absolutely nothing of the blight and curse caused by the influx of hordes of Asiatics." But they found out soon. Thanks to Roach and his delegation, journals that had scarcely considered the subject before--the Philadelphia Public Ledger, the New York Herald, and the St. Louis Republican, to name just a few--began urging modification of the Burlingame Treaty to restrict Chinese immigration. "Public sentiment," wrote Pixley in May, "is turning our way, and will, I think, eventuate in public sentiment adverse to Chinese emigration." He was not exaggerating when he added: "I think I am making an impression that will ultimately contribute to such treaty changes as will, in a large degree, restrain emigration." Even newspapers that Roach and Pixley could not convince provided valuable ammunition for the anti-Chinese crusade that could only have pleased the West Coast. One staunchly Republican St. Louis newspaper, for example, opposed both Roach's mission and revisions of the Burlingame Treaty but nevertheless labelled Chinese immigrants "soulless, conscienceless, alien heathens" who were "the outcasts of ... [a] stunted civilization." The newspaper acknowledged numerous "objections ... against the Chinese race," and concluded that the problem should be left to Californians to decide for themselves. Roach and company would have been happy to oblige.²⁵

By mid-year the avalanche of publicity against the Chinese appeared to have succeeded. Roach and Pixley "have gone home," an editorial in the New York World noted on August 1, "well satisfied with the result of their missionary labors." The World's publisher Manton Marble had helped draft the Democratic platform and had been the editor singled out by Roach to generate anti-Chinese propaganda and so create a national political issue. "The whole sentiment of the East," the editorial continued, "has suddenly grown sober and serious in regard to the Mongolian question."²⁶

But had it? Despite Roach's entreaties, the World had not jumped onto, let alone tried to steer, the anti-Chinese bandwagon. Its propaganda campaign had never even gotten off the ground. One need only peruse the World's pages from a few months earlier. "The anti-Chinese agitation on the Pacific coast," the World editorialized on June 5, "has in all likelihood been given more prominence than it deserved." Moreover, the World noted one week later, "the present anti-Mongolian crusade is as undesirable as it is unjust." The World then assailed the Chinese plank in the Republican platform for being "viciously constructed" and "animated by a vicious spirit" of "race prejudice." But it was that week that Roach visited Marble at Tilden's home, and thereafter the World's editorials became more muted. In its ringing endorsement of the Democratic platform in late June the

World virtually ignored the plank on the Chinese. Two days later the World acknowledged that "Americans of the East have for the most part a very inadequate notion of the perils to Californian society involved in the conditions and the character of Mongolian immigration." The World did print an article headlined "Chinese Smuggling" on July 2 that mentioned "degraded Chinese women," but this was the extent of its anti-Chinese crusade. The World's editorial on August 1 was the last to even mention the subject in the course of the presidential campaign.²⁷

The flurry of activity during the spring and early summer had evoked momentary support, but once Congress acted and the California delegation returned home, the issue died of apathy east of the Rocky Mountains. Anti-Chinese propaganda had a very short shelf-life and, if not repackaged by politicians or reinvigorated by the press, it disappeared from public view. Easterners simply evinced little interest in the issue. Neither candidate--Republican Rutherford B. Hayes, who triumphed over the scandal-tainted Blaine, nor Democrat Samuel Tilden--mentioned the Chinese once the campaign got underway. Long-winded political speeches throughout the fall with such titles as "The Issues of To-Day" and "Real Questions at Issue" never touched on Chinese immigration. Nor did campaign literature meant to sway voters. Even the opening of the Congressional investigation in San Francisco in mid-October created few

ripples. As an article in Scribner's that month mentioned, Easterners displayed "marked indifference" toward the Chinese question. Politicians realized that the issue might galvanize voters in the West but that it carried little appeal in the East. The avalanche of publicity generated by Westerners shaped each party's platform, but the issue quickly receded from the spotlight east of the Rocky Mountains. Reconstruction and old partisan loyalties still dictated voters' decisions and weighed most heavily on people's minds. At massive election-eve demonstrations in New York, Brooklyn, and elsewhere, more than 100,000 people gathered to parade banners, endorse resolutions, and listen to orators late into the night. Despite countless opportunities to make political capital on the Chinese, neither Democrats nor Republicans east of the Rockies brought up the issue. As an editorial in the New York Herald had noted when the campaign began, "The democrats may gain a few votes in California by the strong declaration in their platform against the Chinamen, but elsewhere the question has no interest."²⁸

This same pattern--initial excitement in the spring followed by utter apathy in the fall--can also be found among the working classes. In the wake of the West Coast anti-Chinese agitation in April, the labor press responded at once. "This foreign labor can supplant a great deal of

our white labor," the Pittsburgh National Labor Tribune noted, "and compel it to subsist as it does, or starve. There is nothing to prevent a peaceable Chinese invasion. Are we willing to submit to it? If not, what are we doing to prevent it?" A month later the Pittsburgh weekly warned workers to beware of "filthy, rice eating barbarians who will undermine American labor everywhere." The Labor Tribune was outdone, however, by the Workingman's Map, a short-lived Indianapolis labor journal edited by Calvin A. Light. "The workingmen of California have spoken out boldly and fearlessly," a Map editorial began on April 15. "The United States treaty with China is a fraud," and steps must be taken to regulate "this monstrous emigration." In case workers did not understand the issue, the Map spelled out seven reasons to oppose the Chinese: they do not come to settle; they are slaves; they send their wages back to China; they are immoral; they are "cunning treacherous" thieves; they bring disease; and they smoke opium. "We might string the reasons to a thousand," the editorial concluded, "but do not see the necessity." The Map did suggest a remedy. Americans should force the Chinese to assimilate:

We are not compelled by any international law to receive those who would do us injury, and think the best and quickest way to solve the problem would be to compel them to renounce China, and pass through a red-hot crucible before admitting them, except as visitors, and then not allow them to be accompanied by a bag of rice. They would soon cease to come.

Other pro-labor journals echoed these sentiments. The Chinese were a "curse," wrote the New York Irish World.

"Wherever they settle in a town they defile it.... Herded together like hogs or crowded together as vermin, they bring moral destruction, pauperism and disease.... With an empire of 400,000,000 millions [sic] to draw from the prospect is anything but cheering."²⁹

Exclusion was not specifically mentioned in these editorials but all of them agreed with the mainstream press that the Burlingame Treaty should be modified. The anti-Chinese agitation had an impact on delegates attending the national labor convention in Pittsburgh. This convention, called by the Tyrone meeting the previous December, met in April. Around 100 delegates showed up--25% fewer than had gathered in Tyrone--and twenty-three Socialists walked out in a dispute during the proceedings, reducing the number to roughly eighty. For three days delegates discussed and debated various issues; they made the National Labor Tribune the convention's official organ and adopted a series of nineteen resolutions. The first one stated: "That the convention sympathizes with their fellow workingmen of California in their efforts to repeal the infamous Burlingame Treaty, and consider it one of the worst treaties made by the government of a free country. In short, it is but the revival of the slave trade under another name." The joint actions of the labor press and the Pittsburgh

convention made it seem as though the working classes had found a new panacea. The anti-Chinese movement seemed to be picking up steam. But, as dramatically as it had appeared, it stopped. Efforts by labor editors and delegates to whip up anti-Chinese hatred ultimately fell, if not on deaf ears, on disinterested ears. In Indiana, for example, the Workingman's Map urged workers to organize against the Chinese. "We have over one hundred Chinamen in Indianapolis," the editor noted in June, "who are depriving just one hundred washwomen of work. Let the washwomen drive them off. And let us help them." The Map urged a mass meeting be held and a boycott instituted against Chinese laundries. Nothing happened. "It is very singular," a subscriber later wrote, "that the horney-handed washwomen do not make a crusade on the Chinese in this city." The editor renewed the call for a boycott in July but to no avail. Had a protest meeting or boycott taken place, one could expect the Workingman's Map to have reported it. But it didn't. After July the issue disappeared from its pages. The anti-Chinese campaign had made no observable headway among workers. The Workingman's Advocate conceded as much. No paper east of the Rockies had been more persistent in its hostility to Chinese immigration. For years this labor weekly had published editorials, articles, and letters from the West Coast warning readers of the imminent dangers they faced. The Advocate stepped up the campaign during the

spring of 1876 and gave Roach considerable attention when he lectured in Chicago in May. Despite its herculean efforts against the Chinese, however, the Advocate ruefully admitted the "apparent apathy which now prevails on this important subject."³⁰

It was not that Eastern workers and labor leaders were impervious to what they read and heard; they simply refused to single out the Chinese for special blame. The Chinese, they realized, had become the symbol of the problem but not the problem itself. Speeches made at the Boston Eight-Hour League on May 31 revealed these attitudes. The three leading lights of the New England labor movement--Ira Steward, George Gunton, and George McNeill--all attended and each mentioned the Chinese. Steward drew attention to "[t]hat vast reservoir of cheap labor--millions of six cent a day Chinamen" who could at any time venture eastward, but stopped short of advocating exclusion or immigration restriction as a solution. "Nothing will save us," he said, "but the statesmanship that can make labor dearer everywhere. Wants, opportunities, wages, new employments, must be increased. The cry of over-production must be changed to under-consumption." With higher wages, in other words, and an expanding market, the U.S. could buy its way out of the depression. (Adoption of such Keynesian solutions were still a half century away.) Steward used the Chinese as an illustration of a larger problem, and only as

a segue into more important issues. Gunton elaborated more fully on the Chinese. He emphasized how their few wants and "economical" lifestyle drained the American economy.

McNeill echoed this, warning of the dangers not of Chinese labor but of cheap labor. All labor must rise together, he said:

Our platform is the platform of Labor;--not the labor of Massachusetts, not the labor of New England, not even the labor of the United States. We do not want any man on our platform who does not propose to benefit the labor of the whole world, no matter, whether he be German, Irish, Chinese, or Japanese.

The platform adopted by the League reflected the distinctions made by these orators. One resolution urged workers "everywhere" to read Senator Sargent's recent speech not to foment hostility toward the Chinese but to learn "of the terrors of cheap labor." The Eight-Hour League framed the issue not in terms of ethnic hatred but on the basis of economics and politics. As one resolution stated, "the most highly paid labor the world ever saw, was necessary to make a Republican form of government possible; and confidence in the Republic falls, when wages fall." Therefore, "the question is not narrowed to a conflict between Chinese and American laborers, but is between the cheap labor and the dear labor of the whole world."³¹

Were workers splitting hairs? Was contempt for cheap labor simply a euphemism for unpalatable racism? Not according to the New York Socialist, one of the most radical working-class newspapers of the period. Although it printed

numerous letters from California subscribers denouncing the Chinese, the Socialist went so far as to deny that the West Coast agitation was even a working-class movement. "[I]n its inception and ultimate object," the paper noted, "it is not. It is essentially a movement of the petty capitalists to save themselves from being ruined by the keen competition of Chinese capitalists." The Socialist argued that California manufacturers had originally encouraged the "coolie trade" to get low-paid workers, but once "the smartest of the Mongolians" learned to master "the profit-making system" they began to "beat the petty capitalist at their own game." With the Chinese merchants employing their own countrymen, California manufacturers became threatened. "It is the constantly increasing commercial influences of the few Chinese capitalists," the Socialist concluded, "and not the readily increasing coolie trade, that has alarmed the originators of these secret [anti-Chinese] societies." This said, the Socialist carefully delineated the difference between immigration and importation, and the anomaly of free labor within the capitalist system:

We do not object to the Chinaman as a Chinaman, but we object to him as a coolie, the same as we would object to a French, English, or German, if he comes to this country under the same economic conditions. We object to the system, and not to the man; as we objected to slavery, and not to the negro.

The Socialist further emphasized these points and their openness to diversity:

We do not object to the Chinese on account of their being 'heathen' and calling their god by a different name than ourselves, for we hold that while any man strictly follows the dictates of his conscience, he is entitled to the respect of all good men.³²

To remedy the problem, the Socialist concluded, workers must organize. They must direct their energies not against the Chinese but at the real root of the conflict:

Therefore, we say to the workingmen of California, if the capitalists provoke riots, don't kill the coolies! If the capitalists, by means of secret societies, force an issue, and you are obliged to take a stand for your self-defence, send your first bullet through the head of a white capitalist, the inaugurator of the coolie system, and your second bullet through the yellow capitalist; but, don't kill the coolies! There is, however, no necessity for shooting anybody. Organize and agitate for the abolition of the coolie system, and when that is achieved, agitate for the abolition of the capitalist. The coolie is a slave, the wage laborer is a slave, and the capitalist in both cases is a slaveholder. Organize, organize, organize, but, don't kill the coolie!³³

Coming in early June, amid the height of the anti-Chinese campaign, this editorial caused a furor in California. The San Francisco Chronicle denounced the Socialist for its "stupidity and ignorance" on the Chinese issue and accused it of practicing "Demagogic Journalism." The Chronicle mocked the Socialist, "professedly an organ of the working classes," and added that "the laboring men of San Francisco understand this question far better than the senseless agitators at the East." The Socialist's editors, the Chronicle concluded, were qualified only for the "lunatic ... asylum."³⁴

The extremes within the working-class press--between, for example, the Workingman's Map and the Socialist--coupled with the equivocal attitudes expressed by labor leaders when the anti-Chinese campaign was in full swing illustrate the diversity of opinion within the ranks of organized labor. Chinese immigration was not a "yes" or "no" issue. Rather, it generated interest in a host of larger issues and provoked a spectrum of responses. Organized labor was neither much ahead nor much behind the rest of society: when agitation reached fever pitch, workers responded in a variety of ways; when the agitation subsided, workers too ignored the issue. Even during the peak period--April to June--many workers paid the issue no heed. An exhaustive search of workers' meetings during this period reveals that the Pittsburgh convention, which passed the resolution denouncing the Burlingame Treaty, was a notable exception. Elsewhere the issue was seldom raised. At a workingmen's meeting in Sharon, Pennsylvania, in early April, for example, workers discussed such national issues as the banking system, internal improvements, and tariff reform. According to the report in the National Labor Tribune, Chinese immigration never came up. Likewise at a "largely attended" workers' meeting in New York City where cooperative stores, eight-hour legislation, and the upcoming Pittsburgh convention were discussed in German, French, and English.³⁵ At a socialist rally in Indianapolis in May,

which drew 3,000 participants, the Chinese received only cursory mention.³⁶

In June, Wisconsin workingmen drew up a list of nineteen pro-labor demands to present to various candidates running for local and national office. Neither opposition to the Burlingame Treaty nor hostility to Chinese immigration was among them. At a cigar makers' meeting in New York in mid-June, workers protested the tenement-house system which "spreads disease and ruins the trade." They resolved to contact the Board of Health, lobby the state legislature, and form a committee of agitation to seek reform. Although the Chinese, as Roach and Sargent had recently noted, were making serious inroads in the cigar industry, New York cigar makers made no mention of Chinese labor. A week later, when Roach was in town, delegates from ten trades unions met to appoint a committee to attend the Democratic convention in St. Louis. They endorsed Tilden, chiefly for having vetoed a convict labor bill earlier in the year. Numerous labor leaders addressed the gathering and discussed various issues. But on Chinese immigration not a word was spoken.³⁷

Workers were hardly in the forefront of the anti-Chinese movement. From the small towns of Elizabeth and Newark, New Jersey, to the larger metropolises of New York and Chicago, workers held trade meetings, rallies, and mass demonstrations throughout the summer and fall of 1876. At

none of these was Chinese immigration a subject for concern or debate. Some meetings, to be sure, were of a purely local character. Militant laborers in Albany, New York, for example, urged public works for the unemployed. A similar cry in Jersey City led the mayor to expect bread riots by the unemployed during the summer. Many working-class demonstrations, however, mixed local and national issues and urged federal intervention. A New York City meeting in August called on municipal, state, and federal authorities to help the working classes by establishing public works. Banners displayed during a march to City Hall and speeches that followed also called on Congress to approve railroad subsidies earmarked to create jobs, pass a new silver bill, and enact legislation that would provide public lands for the unemployed. Workers clearly enumerated the ways that Congress could help the working classes. Restricting Chinese immigration was not among them.³⁸

In September labor organizers from seven states gathered in Philadelphia to call on "the leading workingmen throughout the Union" to hold a conference in New York the week before the election to "suggest a remedy" for the "deplorable condition of the workingmen ... throughout the land." They would discuss the candidates, debate major issues, and seek "a more extended and general expression of opinion." The working classes answered the call. Delegates included representatives from such organizations as the

Workingmen's Central Union (New York), the Labor Reform Association (Indiana), the Workingmen's League (New Jersey), the Laborers' and Miners' Union (Pennsylvania), and the Labor Union and Workingman's Association (Illinois). They came from eighteen states from as far away as Maine, Maryland, Wisconsin, and Iowa, and gathered at the Sturtevant House--the same place Roach had been feted back in June. Delegates listened as the chairman summarized their goals:

The time has arrived when workingmen, driven to the wall by oppressive legislation, reckless expenditure of the public revenues and all the manifold evils of corrupt government, feel that it is incumbent upon them to unite and to co-operate intelligently with an eye single to the advancement of their own interests and the redress of the evils from which they suffer.

Delegates traded platitudes, mouthed popular labor rhetoric, and at the end endorsed Tilden for president. One point stands out: Chinese immigration received no mention as a reason, a concern, or an issue. The subject never surfaced.³⁹

The same disinterest is reflected in the two fledgling pro-labor political parties of the period: the Greenback-Labor party and the Workingmen's Party of the United States. The composition of the Greenback-Labor party has never been adequately determined. Organized in 1875, it included agrarian businessmen, middle-class reformers, and pro-labor spokesmen. Their major demand was for the federal government to reissue large amounts of paper money--

greenbacks--to increase the currency supply across the nation. Greenbacks had helped the North finance and win the Civil War. Their reintroduction on a large scale, Greenbackers argued, would raise wages, wrest financial power from "monopolists and bondholders," and return the economy to the hands of the people. Opponents ridiculed the "rag" money idea as inflationary and unworkable, but in the depths of the depression currency reform sounded appealing and Greenback clubs sprang up in many states. The Greenbackers quickly became the largest third party of the 1870s and early '80s and would mount forceful challenges to Democrats and Republicans. The greenback idea remained the party's raison d'etre, but leaders also tried to boost membership by advocating pro-labor measures, such as eight-hour legislation and a national bureau of labor statistics. Indeed, Greenback organizers included former National Labor Union activists Robert Trevellick, Alexander Troup, John Hinchcliffe, and Robert Schilling. In the long run, the Greenback-Labor party would play a key role in the anti-Chinese movement but in its early days the issue had no prominence. At county and state conventions throughout the centennial year organizers neither mentioned nor discussed Chinese immigration. Nor did delegates to the Greenback-Labor convention held in Indianapolis in May. And the Irish World, an early Greenback supporter, printed a regular weekly feature on campaign notes and events which never once

mentioned the impact or danger of Chinese immigration. Neither the Greenback platform nor Peter Cooper, the party's presidential candidate, made any reference to the issue. Unlike Republicans and Democrats, Greenbackers remained mum. For a party reaching out to working-class voters, anti-Chinese politics was not the trick.⁴⁰

If mainstream politicians criticized Greenbackers from the right, Socialists did so from the left. Currency reform was at best, Socialists argued, a reform that would provide workers few tangible or lasting benefits. At a convention in Philadelphia in July 1876, Socialists organized their own party, the Workingmen's Party of the United States. The Workingmen's Party modeled its program after the International Workingmen's Association which had recently collapsed over tensions between Marxists and Lasallean socialists. The new party, based in Chicago and New York, claimed thousands of German- and English-speaking members and ran candidates in numerous states across the country. The New York Socialist changed its name to the New York Labor Standard in September and printed the party's platform in almost every issue. Geared directly to the laboring masses, it recited the standard litany of working-class demands: eight-hour legislation, factory sanitation and inspection laws, state and national bureaus of labor statistics, abolition of child and prison labor, workers' compensation, and free and compulsory education. It made no

mention of Chinese immigration. Nor would it throughout the campaign. Immigration restriction was not an issue with which Socialists or workers chose to be identified.⁴¹

It is impossible to know exactly what workers spoke about on the job, at home, at their neighborhood taverns, or in private conversations at political or union meetings. Even for official gatherings we are dependent on scattered reports and second-hand observations. Nonetheless, it is curious that all the scare tactics used by Congressmen, West Coast activists, and the labor press had so little observable effect on the working classes east of the Rocky Mountains. The massive bombardment of anti-Chinese rhetoric made a strong, sudden impact on everyone in the East, and then fell with a thud. From off-hand comments to formal platforms, the existing evidence reveals scant interest among workers in the dire effects of Chinese immigration. Sparks that in volatile moments could have set off major confrontations or protests--a fistfight between a white man and two Chinese launderers in June in lower Manhattan, rumors during the spring that Chinese laborers had been imported to work on the Long Island Railroad, the naturalization of seven Chinese in the fall so they could vote in the election, or a tour by two Chinese officials from the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition to schools and factories in New York in October--simply extinguished

themselves without causing an uproar. Had workers sought an impetus to mobilize anti-Chinese sentiment or a reason to urge hostile legislation, any of these items could have sufficed. But they didn't. Eastern workers saw virtually no danger in Chinese immigration. The first wave of anti-Chinese activity had crested early in the East and left little imprint on the working classes.⁴²

It did, however, leave an imprint on politicians. The hunt for votes on the West Coast had made Chinese immigration an important issue to national office seekers and their political parties. Hayes had carried California by a slim 2,800 votes out of 155,000 cast; without the state's six electoral votes, in fact, Hayes would have lost the election and the Republicans surrendered the White House. As the Chicago Times noted, "California would never have given him her vote if there had not been an anti-Chinese plank in the Cincinnati platform." Both the Republican and Democratic platforms revealed the growing significance of Chinese immigration, even though Eastern politicians had not yet learned to manipulate the issue for local benefit. The centennial year showed that Chinese immigration could spark excitement everywhere among all classes--but that such excitement was neither indigenous nor self-sustaining. It would need careful nurturance to be successfully exploited. Recognizing that workers in the East and Midwest exhibited little interest in Chinese

immigration, politicians did not trumpet the issue in their name. Recognizing that class issues still took a backseat to sectional issues, politicians kept the issue in abeyance. But politicians also recognized the underlying racism pervading American society and that a handy issue might be theirs for the taking. To politicians, 1876 served as a trial run, laying the groundwork for future campaigns. With class tensions approaching the breaking point throughout the country, politicians would simply have to follow the lead of an "old toiler" from California who pleaded with Eastern workingmen to "arouse yourselves from your lethargy." Workers did not respond, but politicians were just beginning to. The explosion of class conflict in 1877 would provide politicians with the background necessary to transform Chinese immigration from a regional into a sustained national issue.⁴³

Racism held powerful sway among nearly all groups and all segments in the United States. But at the same time, a greater vision still prevailed among the working classes. "And depend upon it," wrote an unnamed Newark worker in September 1876, "that when the whole of the workingmen throughout the world are combined that the cry of men will not be, Oh! He's only an Englishman, or Frenchman, German, American, Chinese, or other nationality, but we shall be able to grasp each other's hand and say: We are brothers."

Nor was this just empty rhetoric. Two months later cigar-maker George G. Block admitted thirty new members to the International Cigarmakers' Union in Philadelphia. "There were Americans, Englishmen, Germans, Spaniards, Cubans and even Chinamen," he wrote, "present at the meeting." And back in June, during the height of the anti-Chinese hysteria, the Irish World praised Ah Shong and James Wah, two Chinese immigrants living in Des Moines, Iowa, for contributing a dollar each to the Irish Skirmishing Fund, an agency set up to provide aid to oppressed farmers and tenants in Ireland. "These Chinamen are absolutely amazed that the Irish people should have 'Bent to the lash with patience,' for seven hundred long, bloody, and famine-stricken years," the Irish World commented. "We appreciate both the gift and the sentiment of our Celestial sympathizers...."⁴⁴

The working classes included millions of Americans who held many disparate beliefs. Some workers, no doubt, imbibed the anti-Chinese sentiments of their California brethren. But more importantly, the best organized and most political members of the working classes had taken their cues from the rank and file. And the rank and file continued to question the anti-Chinese propaganda spewing forth from various sources throughout 1876. Laborers recognized clearly that in a workers' republic, organization and solidarity had to triumph over ethnic and national

differences. As the centennial year drew to a close, the New York Labor Standard editorialized:

A fraternity of peoples is highly necessary for the cause of labor, because we find that whenever we attempt to better our social condition by reducing the hours of toil or by raising the price of our labor, our employers threaten us with bringing over, as the case may be, Frenchmen, or Germans, or Americans, or Chinese and others to do our work, at a reduced rate of wages. The employers are able through this to play us off one against the other and to drag us down to starvation. This cannot be the case where there is systematic organization and communication between workers of all countries.⁴⁵

NOTES

1. Philip A. Roach to Manton Marble, June 7, 1880, Manton Marble Papers, Library of Congress.
2. Pittsburgh National Labor Tribune, Jan. 8, 1876, p. 2.
3. Irish World, Jan. 22, 1876, p. 6; New York Herald, Jan. 11, 1876, p. 6; Iron Molders' Journal, Jan. 10, 1876, p. 552.
4. New York Herald, March 15, 1876, p. 4, March 25, 1876, p. 6; New York Sun, March 24, 1876, p. 3, March 25, 1876, p. 1.
5. New York Herald, Feb. 23, 1876, p. 3, New York Tribune, Feb. 23, 1876. For background on the United Order of American Mechanics, see Bruce Laurie, Working People of Philadelphia, 1800-1850 (Philadelphia: Temple, 1980), pp. 174-76. John Higham called the Order "[a] mere fragment" after the Civil War and describes a major regrowth in the late 1880s. The intervening years remain a mystery. (John Higham, Strangers in the Land: Patterns in American Nativism, 1860-1925 (New York: Atheneum, 1975; originally published 1955), pp. 13, 23, 57, 64.)
6. Mary Roberts Coolidge, Chinese Immigration (New York, 1909), p. 112; San Francisco Alta California, March 21, 1876, p. 1, March 23, 1876, p. 1, March 26, 1876, p. 1, March 29, 1876, p. 1; Elmer Clarence Sandmeyer, The Anti-Chinese Movement in California (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois, 1973; originally published 1939), pp. 57-59. Bryant's address was also prompted by a recent Supreme Court ruling declaring a law restricting entry of Chinese women into the country unconstitutional.
7. San Francisco Alta California, April 6, 1876, p. 1.
8. San Francisco Alta California, April 4, 1876, p. 1, April 12, 1876, p. 1, April 15, 1876, p. 1; Sandmeyer, The Anti-Chinese Movement in California, pp. 60-62; Chinese Immigration. The Social, Moral, and Political Effect of Chinese Immigration. Testimony Taken Before a Committee of the Senate of the State of California, Appointed April 3d, 1876 (Sacramento: State Printing Office, 1876; reprinted 1970).
9. The queue ordinance was declared unconstitutional three years later. See The Invalidity of the 'Queue Ordinance' of the City and County of San Francisco. Opinion

of the Circuit Court of the United States, for the District of California, in Ho Ah Kow vs. Matthew Nunan, Delivered July 7th, 1879 (San Francisco: Rice, 1879).

10. San Francisco Alta California, March 23, 1876, p. 1, May 9, 1876, p. 1; San Francisco Chronicle, May 10, 1876, p. 2; San Francisco Bulletin, March 23, 1876, quoted in Sandmeyer, The Anti-Chinese Movement in California, p. 58.

It appears that McDonald, though appointed, never went. On other anti-Chinese meetings in the West, see San Francisco Alta California, April 1, 1876, p. 1, April 5, 1876, p. 1, May 10, 1876, p. 1, May 13, 1876, p. 1, May 27, 1876, p. 1, June 8, 1876, p. 1.

11. Biographical information on Roach taken from H., "Hon. Philip A. Roach, California," McGee's Illustrated Weekly (II:10), July 28, 1877, p. 149; Irish World, Oct. 31, 1874, p. 8; Peter Thomas Conmy, Philip Augustine Roach, 1820-1889, California Pioneer (San Francisco: Dolores Press, 1958). The quote is from p. 5.

12. Workingman's Advocate, May 20, 1876, p. 2.

13. Workingman's Advocate, May 20, 1876, p. 2; Philip A. Roach to Manton Marble, June 7, 1880, Manton Marble Papers; Frank M. Pixley to John Strathman (letter, San Francisco, June 5, 1876), reprinted in San Francisco Chronicle, June 15, 1876, p. 3; The Nation, April 13, 1876, p. 241, May 18, 1876, pp. 314-15; "A." (letter, San Francisco, April 22, 1876) in The Nation, May 18, 1876, pp. 321-22.

14. San Francisco Chronicle, June 21, 1876, p. 3, July 19, 1876, p. 1; Irish World, July 1, 1876, p. 3.

15. San Francisco Chronicle, June 16, 1876, p. 3, July 19, 1876, p. 1; Frank M. Pixley to John Strathman (letter, June 5, 1876) reprinted in San Francisco Chronicle, June 15, 1876, p. 3; Frank M. Pixley to Mayor A.J. Bryant (letter, May 12, 1876) reprinted in San Francisco Chronicle, June 4, 1876, p. 7; Philip A. Roach to Thomas F. Bayard, Jan. 16, 1879, Bayard Papers, Library of Congress.

16. Congressional Record, 44th Cong, 1st sess., pp. 477 (Jan. 18, 1876), 901 (Feb. 7, 1876), p. 2793 (April 20, 1876).

17. Congressional Record, 44th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 2850-57 (May 1, 1876).

18. Ibid. Sargent was also the Senate's foremost advocate of women's rights. In 1878 he introduced the first constitutional amendment to enfranchise women. He also invited prominent suffragists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony to testify before the Senate. Sargent's wife, Ellen Clark Sargent, it might be added, was president of the California Woman Suffrage Association, and his daughter, Dr. Elizabeth C. Sargent, was a leading suffragist. (Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Ida Husted Harper, History of Woman Suffrage, II (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1882), pp. 483-84; III (Rochester: Charles Mann, 1886), pp. 70-75, 108-11, 121, 245-47; IV, pp. 135, 287, 366, 481, 487; V (New York: Little and Ives, 1922), pp. 150, 328, 623.)

19. Congressional Record, 44th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 3099-3101 (May 16, 1876). Reporter quoted in San Francisco Alta California, May 8, 1876, p. 1.

20. Congressional Record, 44th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 3183-86 (May 18, 1876).

21. M.A. Clancy and William Nelson, comps., Proceedings of the Republican National Convention, held at Cincinnati, Ohio, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, June 14, 15, and 16, 1876, Resulting in the Nomination for President and Vice-President Rutherford B. Hayes and William A. Wheeler (Concord, N.H.: Republican Press Association, 1876), p. 58; Donald Bruce Johnson, National Party Platforms, I: 1840-1956 (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois, 1978), p.58.

22. Clancy and Nelson, Proceedings of the Republican National Convention, pp. 58-63; Congressional Record, 44th Cong., 1st sess., p. 4418 (July 6, 1876); San Francisco Alta California, June 16, 1876, p. 1; New York Tribune, June 16, 1876, p. 1; New York Witness quoted in San Francisco Chronicle, July 4, 1876, p. 2. On Dutcher, see Brooklyn Eagle, Jan. 16, 1880, p. 4.

23. Philip A. Roach to Manton Marble, June 7, 1880, A.J. Bryant to Manton Marble, June 17, 1876, Marble Papers; California delegates quoted in St. Louis Globe-Democrat, June 25, 1876, p. 3; New York Sun, June 27, 1876, p. 1; Johnson, National Party Platforms, p. 50; Official Proceedings of the National Democratic Convention, Held in St. Louis, Mo., June 27th, 28th and 29th, 1876. With an Appendix Containing the Letters of Acceptance of Gov. Tilden and Gov. Hendricks (St. Louis: Woodward, Tiernan & Hale, 1876), pp. 97-99.

24. Congressional Record, 44th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 4418-21 (July 6, 1876), 4491, 4507 (July 10, 1876), 4671-72 (July 17, 1876), 4678, 4705 (July 18, 1876), 5060 (Aug. 2, 1876), 5676 (Aug. 15, 1876).
25. San Francisco Chronicle, May 8, 1876, p. 2, June 14, 1876, p. 1, June 17, 1876, p. 2, July 19, 1876, pp. 1, 2, Frank M. Pixley to A.J. Bryant (letter, May 16, 1876) reprinted in San Francisco Chronicle, June 4, 1876, p. 7; New York Herald, May 4, 1876, p. 6, June 5, 1876, p. 6, June 8, 1876, p. 6; St. Louis Globe-Democrat, April 7, 1876, p. 4, May 5, 1876, p. 4, June 12, 1876, p. 4.
26. New York World, Aug. 1, 1876, p. 4.
27. New York World, June 5, 1876, p. 4, June 14, 1876, p. 4, June 19, 1876, p. 4, June 29, 1876, p. 4, July 1, 1876, p. 4, July 2, 1876, p. 3; Philip A. Roach to Manton Marble, June 7, 1880, Marble Papers.
See also New York World editorial (June 14, 1876, p. 4) supporting the California Supreme Court's ruling of Chinese immigration restriction laws as unconstitutional.
28. T.J. Vivian, "John Chinaman in San Francisco," Scribner's Monthly, Oct. 1876, quoted in Loren W. Fessler, ed., Chinese in America: Stereotyped Past, Changing Present (New York: Vantage, 1983), p. 127. The campaign can be followed in any of the major dailies. The quotes are from New York World, Oct. 5, 1876, pp. 1-2; New York Sun, Oct. 13, 1876, p. 3; New York Herald, Aug. 15, 1876, p. 4. See also New York World, Oct. 14, 1876, pp. 1, 8, Nov. 3, 1876, pp. 1, 8; New York Sun, Nov. 3, 1876, p. 1, Nov. 5, 1876, p. 1; New York Herald, Nov. 2, 1876, p. 3.
29. Pittsburgh National Labor Tribune, April 29, 1876, p. 2, May 27, 1876, p. 1; Indianapolis Workingman's Map, April 15, 1876, p. 2, April 22, 1876, p. 2; Irish World, May 6, 1876, p. 2.
30. Pittsburgh National Labor Tribune, April 22, 1876, p. 1; Indianapolis Workingman's Map, June 17, 1876, p. 4, "Old Singularity" (letter, Indianapolis, June 24, 1876), in Indianapolis Workingman's Map, June 24, 1876, p. 3, July 1, 1876, pp. 2, 3; Workingman's Advocate, May 20, 1876, p. 2.
31. New York Socialist, June 10, 1876, p. 4, June 17, 1876, pp. 3-4; Workingman's Advocate, June 10, 1876, p. 1.
32. New York Socialist, June 3, 1876, p. 2.
33. New York Socialist, June 3, 1876, p. 2.

34. San Francisco Chronicle, June 14, 1876, p. 4.

35. Letter (unsigned, Sharon, Pa., April 15, 1876) in Pittsburgh National Labor Tribune, April 22, 1876, p. 4; New York Herald, April 10, 1876, p. 9.

36. In the Socialist account, the Chinese were mentioned in about a half dozen sentences, and then dropped. The report in the Workingman's Map made no mention of the Chinese. (New York Socialist, May 13, 1876, p. 1; Indianapolis Workingman's Map, May 6, 1876, p. 1.)

37. Indianapolis Workingman's Map, July 1, 1876, p. 3; New York Herald, June 14, 1876, p. 11; New York Sun, June 22, 1876, p. 1.

38. New York Herald, July 22, 1876, p. 3, Aug. 10, 1876, p. 10, Aug. 11, 1876, p. 3, Oct. 14, 1876, p. 3; New York World, Aug. 10, 1876, p. 2, Aug. 11, 1876, p. 1. For other meetings, see New York Herald, July 11, 1876, p. 11, July 12, 1876, p. 5, July 31, 1876, p. 3, Aug. 1, 1876, p. 8, Aug. 2, 1876, p. 8, Sept. 15, 1876, p. 3; New York Sun, Aug. 8, 1876, p. 3, Aug. 13, 1876, p. 7, Oct. 25, 1876, p. 1, Oct. 31, 1876, p. 1, Nov. 1, 1876, p. 1, Nov. 3, 1876, p. 1; Chicago Inter-Ocean, Sept. 20, 1876, p. 5.

39. New York Herald, Nov. 4, 1876, p. 2; New York World, Nov. 4, 1876, p. 8.

40. For early Greenback conventions and meetings, see Irish World, March 25, 1876, p. 3, May 27, 1876, p. 5, June 10, 1876, p. 5, Sept. 23, 1876, p. 8, Oct. 7, 1876, pp. 1, 5, Oct. 28, 1876, p. 5; New York Herald, Feb. 17, 1876, p. 7, Feb. 23, 1876, p. 6, March 10, 1876, p. 10, March 16, 1876, p. 3, May 27, 1876, p. 5, June 18, 1876, p. 10, Aug. 31, 1876, p. 4, Sept. 27, 1876, p. 4. Convention proceedings are in St. Paul (Minnesota) Anti-Monopolist, May 25, 1876, pp. 1, 4. For general background, see Irwin Unger, The Greenback Era, A Social and Political History of American Finance, 1865-1879 (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University, 1964).

41. See, for example, New York Labor Standard, Sept. 23, 1876, p. 3. See also New York Herald, Aug. 10, 1876, p. 6.

42. New York Herald, June 23, 1876, p. 11, Oct. 14, 1876, p. 5, Oct. 15, 1876, p. 11, Oct. 27, 1876, p. 9; New York Sun, June 5, 1876, p. 2; New York Socialist, July 1, 1876, p. 1.

43. Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Quarterly, 1985), p. 339; Chicago Times, Dec. 14, 1877, p. 4; R.J. Mills (letter, San Francisco, July 2, 1876) in New York Socialist, July 22, 1876, p. 3.

44. "A Jeweller" (letter) in New York Labor Standard, Sept. 30, 1876, p. 2; George G. Block (letter, Philadelphia, Dec. 2, 1876) in New York Labor Standard, Dec. 9, 1876, p. 1; Irish World, June 10, 1876, p. 4.

45. New York Labor Standard, Dec. 23, 1876, p. 1. An article in the New York Socialist (May 20, 1876, p. 2) made a similar point. The problem was not the "influx" of "Canadians, Chinese, Italians etc." but that they were "not organized."

CHAPTER 6

"THE REIGN OF TERROR TO COME": UPRISING AND RED SCARE, 1877-78

"There is distrust, dissatisfaction, discontent about us everywhere."

--Chicago Inter-Ocean, June 15, 1878

"The time has evidently come when the Chinese question has grown to such an importance as to demand from Congress a more careful examination than it has heretofore received."

--New York Tribune, Nov. 30, 1878

"That was a glorious moment for labor when Bohemians, Germans, English, and even Chinese, clung to each other for support and learned that in union only is there strength."

--New York Labor Standard, Jan. 27, 1878

At a St. Patrick's Day banquet in Hartford, Connecticut, in 1877, an Irishman proposed a toast to "China and Ireland--The two ancient nations." Yung Wing, a Chinese official visiting the nation, had known in advance of the toast and sent a note to the revelers. "I would simply say," Yung wrote in his letter read at the feast, "that however the two people may now differ in manners and customs, in politics and religion, the day, I hope, is not far distant when these differences will vanish before the light of knowledge and truth, as the two races progress in Christian education and civilization." These sentiments

were warmly toasted by the assemblage, and the spirit of merry-making carried on late into the evening.¹

Such instances of inter-ethnic respect may not have been typical in the waning days of Reconstruction, but they did exist as beacons of hope for a multilingual, polyglot nation. As with Ah Shong and James Wah's contributions to the Irish Skirmishing Fund a year earlier, the Irish and Chinese, perennially portrayed as at loggerheads, could have moments of cooperation. The working classes would increasingly confront ethnic conflict and challenges to labor unity as the decade wore on. In the early months of 1877, however, little had happened, as far as Chinese immigration was concerned, to indicate any change from the previous year. The political news dominating headlines all winter long focused on the unresolved presidential election. Tilden had carried the popular vote in November and seemed to have a slight majority of the electoral votes as well. But disputed returns from four states threw the outcome into question and Congress and the nation wrestled with the matter for four long months. As late as February, with Grant's term nearing its end, the president was without a successor. A combination of political deals and party wrangling finally awarded the presidency to Hayes on March 2, forty-eight hours before Inauguration Day.* The

*Because March 4 fell on a Sunday, Hayes's inauguration was actually delayed until March 5.

electoral crisis had passed, but charges of conniving and corruption would dog Hayes throughout this term.

"Rutherfraud" became a popular sobriquet.²

On February 28, at the peak of the electoral controversy, Congress released its long-awaited report on Chinese immigration. The committee had held eighteen sessions over a month's time in San Francisco the previous fall and heard testimony from more than one hundred witnesses. Manufacturers, ministers, farmers, public officials, and workers, they came from all walks of life and gave their opinions and answers to a series of questions loaded against the Chinese. "What is the condition of their health and their habits of cleanliness and sanitary regulations?" read one question. "Do they prevent the immigration of white labor to this coast from Europe and from the eastern states?" read a second. Still other questions probed the "moral and physical condition" of Chinese immigrants and whether the women were "free, or ... bought and sold as slaves?" No Chinese testified. While a handful of witnesses expressed sympathy for the Chinese, the overwhelming majority were hostile and gave observations clearly aimed at immigration restriction. The committee's majority report, written by Senator Sargent [R-CA], reflected this sentiment, and recommended both modification of the Burlingame Treaty and legislation to restrict Chinese immigration. Two minority reports emerged. One, written by

Representative Edwin R. Meade [D-NY], differed little from the majority report, but stressed a diplomatic rather than legislative solution. The second, by Senator Oliver P. Morton [R-IN], gave a completely opposite picture. Morton deplored the racial prejudice in California and felt immigration should remain open to all. Morton's report, however, gathered from his private papers, appeared posthumously almost a year later, and critics challenged its authenticity.³

Despite the length and detail of the Congressional investigation--the testimony alone filled over 1200 pages--the witnesses revealed little that had not been heard before. The familiar charges of immorality, nonassimilation, and low wages appeared repeatedly, and witnesses presented "evidence" of contracts for Chinese women imported as prostitutes. Many witnesses expectedly stressed the deleterious effects on white labor and the dangers of Chinese citizenship. Cloaked with the authority of a Congressional inquiry, the final document gave the anti-Chinese movement an air of legitimacy, but its impact was limited. Its egregious prejudice robbed the investigation of its claim to objectivity and its poor timing dampened the effect its backers had predicted.⁴

A brutal massacre two weeks later captured more headlines than all the pages of testimony released by Congress. On March 13 a band of armed white men and boys in

Chico, California, stormed a cabin where a half dozen Chinese workers were resting. Without provocation the whites opened fire and shot them all. Then they threw oil on the bodies and set the cabin afire. Editorials of outrage deploring the "Chico Massacre" appeared everywhere from across the political spectrum, but even this grisly episode receded quickly from the spotlight. The anti-Chinese movement remained stalled and localized, entrenched in the West. Soon after publishing its report, the 44th Congress adjourned for good. The new Congress would not convene until the end of the year. Politicians, knowing that 1877 was an off-year for elections, had little need to raise the issue.⁵

Nor did workers. The Congressional investigation provided plenty of ammunition for anti-Chinese advocates, but the working classes made little use of it. In fact, at workers' meetings reported in Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Missouri, and Washington, D.C., during the first six months of the year, neither the Congressional investigation nor Chinese immigration ever surfaced. "About one hundred of the unwashed, unkempt, tobacco-spitting, beer-guzzling members of communistic rabble" gathered at one such meeting in Chicago on March 3, sneered the Chicago Times, just days after the Congressional report appeared and Hayes had been declared president. But these events aroused little

interest, as workers spent the evening discussing legislation relating to convict labor, a national bureau of labor statistics, and the right of workers to sue employers who failed to pay them.⁶ A week later Chicago bricklayers and masons circulated a petition to be sent to Congress favoring a new homestead law presently under consideration. Potters in Trenton, New Jersey, meanwhile, sent a petition to Congress opposing a new tariff. Workers evidently had concerns at both the local and federal levels, but Chinese immigration was not among them. Neither working-class gatherings nor the working-class press east of the Rockies paid any attention to the issue in early 1877. One of the rare mentions of Chinese laborers appeared in the New York Labor Standard in January. A news bulletin from the British Consul in Newchwang, China, reported labor unrest among underpaid Chinese gold miners in the province of Kirin. Remarked the Labor Standard: "The battle between labor and bossism--between right and wrong--rages everywhere."⁷

Working-class protest continued to focus on programs to alleviate the suffering caused by the depression. The hard times spawned new organizations that promised economic salvation. One of these was the Labor League of the United States, an interracial body in Washington, D.C. Its leaders met with President Hayes in April to demand payment for 10,000 workers allegedly defrauded by the Board of Public Works and to press for vast sums of money for internal

improvements that would provide employment. Chinese immigration never surfaced. Another such group, the Bread Winners League in New York, also urged public works and denounced national banks and railroad subsidies. The Bread Winners issued a manifesto in May with additional demands, but of Chinese immigration not a syllable was spoken.⁸ Judging from the words uttered by workers and labor leaders as well as by organizations seeking to attract them, Chinese immigration remained an invisible issue carrying little appeal.

With the United States entrenched in its fourth year of depression and with no prospects of relief or recovery in sight, workers' frustration and rhetoric continued to mount. Starving workers in Scranton, Pennsylvania, marched through a snowstorm demanding "bread or blood," "relief or riot." The New York Herald quoted an unemployed laborer in March saying that a workers' revolution was a distinct possibility. Surveying the era a year later, the New York Labor Standard wrote:

In every State of the Union men are out of employment by thousands. The poorhouses and prisons are full to overflowing; crime is rampant throughout the country; suicides are increasing daily; women, whose souls shrink from impurity, are forced to sell their bodies for bread; an array of tramps, homeless and desperate, wander back and forth through all the land, while our cities swarm with the destitute and starving.

Labor violence had erupted sporadically throughout the depression, in Pennsylvania in 1874, in Indiana in 1875, and most recently in Haverstraw, New York, in May 1877.

Nothing, however, had prepared the country for the mass labor uprising that broke out in July. Following a series of wage cuts instituted during the spring, railroad workers initiated the first nationwide general strike in the nation's history. It began in Martinsburg, West Virginia, on July 16 when workers refused to let a Baltimore and Ohio train pass through town until the company rescinded the wage cut. The company refused and officials contacted the governor to call out the militia to disperse the strikers. The governor complied and the next day troops arrived. The combined forces of the workers and community, however, repulsed them, and the militia scattered. This momentary victory ignited similar uprisings in Buffalo, Pittsburgh, Chicago, and countless smaller towns across the country. Fellow workers walked off the job in support and in some cities business practically stopped. In St. Louis factories shut down and a workers' committee ran the city's affairs. As the strike spread through the Midwest and into the South, violence and property damage led governors to call out state militia. When they could not quell the uprising, President Hayes sent in federal troops.⁹

For a week fears of revolution and anarchy dominated headlines. "Pittsburgh Sacked," trumpeted the New York World on July 22, "... in the hands of men dominated by the devilish spirit of Communism." Chicago too, the New York Times added later, was "in Possession of Communists." The

Herald urged soldiers to shoot into the crowd. Even the generally pro-labor Sun urged "a diet of lead for the hungry strikers." And the sanctimonious Brooklyn minister Henry Ward Beecher earned the ever-lasting enmity of the working classes by declaring that a man unable to survive on bread and water and a dollar a day wasn't fit to live. By the month's end, more than a hundred people lay dead, and property destruction was estimated in the millions.¹⁰

The national railroad strike and ensuing violence was unquestionably the most significant event of the decade. It lay bare for all to see the deepening class divisions that Americans had been denying for years. It violently jolted the nation into the modern era of mass labor militancy, federal military intervention, and widespread red-baiting of the working classes. The details and impact of the railroad strike have been well told by others and need not be repeated here. A watershed event coming at the end of Reconstruction, it symbolically marked the end of the Civil War era. Some of the troops, in fact, used to suppress the strike had just been withdrawn from the South by Hayes as part of the deal for the presidency. But political maneuvers aside, the preindustrial world of artisans and journeymen had practically vanished, making way for a new world of massive corporate enterprise, heavily capitalized industry, and endless confrontations between workers and bosses.

An indirect result of the labor uprising of 1877 was the Chinese Exclusion Act. Although workers would continue to express only minimal interest in immigration restriction, other segments of society would begin to see it as a solution for the nation's industrial problems. Class tensions remained particularly high for the next twelve months. Politicians, editors, and clergymen voiced constant fears of an armed proletariat poised for revolution. This atmosphere of violence and uncertainty breathed new life into the anti-Chinese movement, not among workers who had a different agenda but among those seeking to eliminate or defuse class tensions.

All the major reforms sought by the working classes during the 1870s shared one common feature: the need for government intervention. Whether mass public works programs or nationalization of railroads, each predicated a large, active state for implementation. The Civil War had witnessed the peak of government intervention in national and local affairs. In issuing greenbacks, drafting soldiers, and liberating slaves, the federal government had taken on unprecedented powers. These powers were essential in carrying out military reconstruction in the late 1860s. The rise of an active state, however, frightened many Republicans (and Democrats as well) who recoiled at the prospect of an all-powerful government. An active state had already precipitated radical changes in the South. What

might such a state do to the North if controlled by working-class militants and the "communistic rabble"? Workers, after all, composed a majority of the nation's voters. Fear of an active state contributed to the collapse of reconstruction and underlay much of the Liberal Republican bolt of the early 1870s. But if Republicans could begin preaching a small-government, laissez-faire philosophy, they still could not ignore the class divisions renting the nation. Something had to be done to mollify workers. From this crucible of political stalemate and labor violence, Chinese exclusion emerged as a savior to leaders in Washington. After the summer of 1877, politicians would increasingly appropriate the issue of Chinese exclusion and couch it in the language of a class imperative. Chinese exclusion served as a panacea for a complex web of problems as politicians strove to turn a regional, cross-class issue into a national working-class demand. Although immigration restriction offered scant relief and appealed to few workers, politicians seized it as an easy solution with which they could pose as defenders of the working class. As a result of the national railroad strike, Chinese exclusion would find new champions in the highest echelons of government.¹¹

This process would take time, but the labor uprising also had a more immediate effect: It invigorated the anti-Chinese movement on the West Coast. During the peak of the

conflict in late July, several thousand workers in San Francisco held a mass meeting to express support for their brethren back east. Speeches and resolutions attacked municipal corruption, monopoly rule, and the starvation wages of the capitalist system. They called for the eight-hour day and the nationalization of railroads. Near the end of the evening, members of an anti-coolie club barged in. Greeted with "cheers and jeers," the infiltrators commandeered the meeting and things turned ugly. Cries of "On to Chinatown" drowned out the opposition, and gangs of men and boys began roaming the city, heading for the Chinese community. By night's end, they had demolished twenty Chinese laundries and buildings, the most serious disturbance in San Francisco history. The rampage continued the next day as rioters attempted to burn the docks and ships of the Pacific Mail Steamship company, the key transporter of Chinese immigrants. With assistance from the U.S. Navy, a vigilante-style Committee of Safety known as the "Pick-Handle Brigade" beat back the rioters, but the violence continued. The next day authorities and the "hoodlums," as the rioters were called, battled it out in a major confrontation that left four men dead and fourteen wounded. With this, the violence finally ended. But workingmen's meetings did not.¹²

In August workers and sympathizers began meeting on a large open space on the west side of San Francisco known as

the sand lots. Every week, sometimes every night, amid the glow of bonfires and torches, they listened to inflammatory speeches filled with harsh denunciations of corporations, monopolies, and the Chinese. In September and October the group organized itself into the Workingmen's Party of California and elected Denis Kearney president. Kearney (pronounced cur-nee), the sand lots' most fiery orator, rallied supporters with the cry "The Chinese Must Go," and threatened violence to achieve this end. Kearney's appeal proved magnetic and, egged on by a sympathetic press, sand lot audiences grew rapidly, embracing all segments of society. "Clerks and the better class of citizens now began to attend his meetings," wrote the eminent observer Lord Bryce, and the Workingmen's Party became an important factor in California politics. Historian Neil Larry Shumsky has recently noted that for all their rhetoric, neither the party nor its members ever "committed an act of violence, destroyed property, or injured a single person." Perhaps so. Its unwavering anti-Chinese message, however, electrified white Californians of all stripes and sent membership rolls soaring.¹³

News from San Francisco filtered east throughout the summer and fall but had surprisingly little impact on organized labor. The railroad strike, however, led to an unprecedented flurry of working-class meetings and political activity. In every community with a rank and file--large

metropolises like Philadelphia and St. Louis, medium-sized cities like Toledo and Nashville, and smaller towns like Cumberland, Maryland, and Hannibal, Missouri--workers gathered to support the strikers and denounce government repression. A broadside posted by the International Workingmen Association attacked the press and urged a general strike for the eight-hour day. In Chicago, fifteen to twenty thousand people turned out for a meeting on July 21 that was "enthusiastic ... throughout." "We are," shouted Albert R. Parsons, "the grand army of starvation." Whether demanding jobs and bread or denouncing corporations and the capitalist system, the speakers were "heartily applauded," admitted the usually hostile Chicago Times, and generated "rousing and long-continued cheering." Workers held meetings every day in major urban centers. Thousands filled Tompkins Square Park in New York to hear orators--"communists," said the Herald--describe the week's uprising and urge working-class unity. The next day workers packed Cooper Union to hear Joseph P. McDonnell, editor of the Labor Standard, read resolutions condemning capitalist oppression and the use of the military. Other speakers included journalist John Swinton, tailor Robert Blissert, and twenty-seven-year-old Samuel Gompers. McDonnell then traveled to Baltimore and gave a similar address to an excited crowd of 6,000, "principally made up of laborers." Few cities needed outsiders to attract an audience. Five

thousand gathered for a mass meeting in Wilkes-Barre, an equal number in Newark. Thousands also gathered in Boston, Brooklyn, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, and Columbus.¹⁴

Numbers alone do not tell the story. Content of the meetings is far more important. In the weeks following the uprising workers delivered and absorbed the greatest dose of revolutionary rhetoric and proletarian protest the nation had ever heard. The government was savaged and capitalism trashed as workers called for a more just distribution of wealth and power. They attacked Gould, Vanderbilt, Scott, and their fellow railroad barons. They urged public ownership of transportation and means of communication, and they demanded a host of radical reforms. Chinese exclusion was not among them. Nor was Chinese immigration mentioned by the Iron and Steel Workers Convention held in Columbus in early August, or by E. Herbert Graeme, secretary of the New York Workingmen's Union, who delivered a long lecture entitled "Lessons of the Strikes" to the New York Liberal Club on August 17. In the hundreds of speeches and millions of words uttered east of the Rockies during the labor uprising of 1877, I have found but a single mention of the Chinese. In Chicago, Albert R. Parson attacked monopolists for reducing wages so low "that we are expected to conform our lives to the lives of the Chinamen." A telling comment to be sure, but hardly a call for immigration restriction, little more than a breeze amid a raging storm.¹⁵

The railroad strike proved an organizing bonanza for working-class political associations. The Workingmen's Party, organized in 1876, mushroomed in industrial regions nationwide, and fielded slates in New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio, Illinois, Connecticut, Wisconsin, and elsewhere. Their platform did not differ substantially from the preceding year, with eight-hour legislation, factory sanitation and inspection laws, state and national bureaus of labor statistics, abolition of child and prison labor, and workers' compensation laws leading the way. Newly promoted to the pantheon of working-class demands was government ownership of railroads, canals, and telegraph lines. While united in principles and basic demands, the Workingmen's Party was not a centralized, monolithic organization; the party apparatus in each state or city was fairly autonomous and took liberties to modify their platform. The Pennsylvania Workingmen, for example, urged tariff revisions and called for courts of arbitration to settle labor disputes. The Ohio wing of the party sought an end to company scrip and demanded wages be paid in cash. Massachusetts Workingmen, seeking Irish support, urged free naturalization of foreign-born citizens. The New Englanders also favored a graduated income tax, opposed military drilling in the public schools, and nominated Wendell Phillips for governor. The New York Workingmen added equal pay for women, state savings bonds, a minimum wage of two

dollars per day, and the abolition of tenement-house labor. These various demands reflected regional differences within the party and enabled organizers to tailor their platform to the specific concerns of the local working-class community. Not one branch outside of the West Coast ever bothered with Chinese immigration. In lengthy editorials during the campaign, the Chicago Times criticized every plank adopted by the Workingmen's parties in Chicago, Cincinnati, Columbus, "and elsewhere." The editorials never mentioned Chinese immigration.¹⁶

The Workingmen's Party was not the only labor-based organization seeking the workingman's vote in 1877. In New York, the Bread Winners League and the Greenbackers each issued platforms and proposed running rival candidates. At the risk of balkanizing a growing working-class movement, however, the parties attempted to form a coalition. The Bread Winners nominated Greenbackers to head their ticket and the Workingmen urged both groups to join them for the fall campaign.¹⁷ The Workingmen's Party, the New York Herald noted in September, "has never worked in unison with the other workingmen's organization, but will do so this year." Sharing candidates and selected platform planks, labor parties in the Empire State entered into an uneasy, temporary alliance. In Ohio too, some local Workingmen's chapters merged with the Greenbackers, but such unity was not followed across the board.¹⁸ In Philadelphia, for

example, representatives from "nearly all trades" in the city met in August to form a "protective labor party." They endorsed the usual pro-labor platform, adding a novel proposal for direct representation of the working classes in municipal, state, and national legislatures. The Workingmen's Party hailed the gathering and sent a note of congratulations. Delegates, however, wanted nothing to do with any "Communistic" organization, and its "communication ... was tabled immediately." In September, delegates from labor organizations in Pittsburgh, Scranton, Reading, Allentown, and Philadelphia met in Harrisburg and adopted the Workingmen's platform. Greenbackers sought affiliation with them but, the New York Herald reported, "the labor men obstinately refused to have anything to do with them." Pennsylvania thus saw a plethora of antagonistic labor parties. In Chicago fusion of the Workingmen with the Greenbackers and even with the Democrats was discussed but never achieved. The Workingmen's Party there produced an offshoot, the Workingmen's Industrial Party, which was swallowed up by the Democrats just before election day.¹⁹ Maryland too witnessed the competition of rival labor reform parties.²⁰ Internal political maneuvering and local power struggles rather than broad ideological differences accounted for much of the discord, as all the platforms, resolutions, and demands of the competing third parties proved remarkably similar. Had any literate, well-informed

American east of the Rockies been asked on election day 1877 to recite the standard array of working-class issues, Chinese immigration would not have been mentioned. It received scarcely any notice throughout the entire campaign.

The Workingmen did not sweep any elections in November but they did make surprising inroads on the major parties. In Chicago they polled over 6,000 votes--12% of the total. They captured roughly the same number in Buffalo, 1,600 in New Haven, and 9,000 in Cincinnati. Buoyed by this promising debut, the Workingmen held a national convention in Newark at the end of December. For six days delegates held discussions in English, German, Bohemian, and French. Their chief accomplishments were changing their name to the Socialistic Labor Party and adopting a standard platform. The West Coast agitation against Chinese immigration received some mention, and on the fifth day Brooklyn delegate Justus Schwab offered a resolution. Hoping to satisfy party members, Schwab condemned not the Chinese immigrant but the "contracts which enslave him." The convention's official proceedings reveal no dissent, and Socialists approved the following resolution: "The importation of Coolies under contract must be immediately prohibited, and the Coolies already in America released from all similar obligations."²¹ Thus at its founding meeting, the Socialistic Labor Party clearly distinguished--as the labor movement always had--between immigration and

importation. Little had changed since 1870. As the nation's bloodiest year in more than a decade came to a close, Chinese immigration remained a minor concern to Socialists, organized labor, and the working classes.

The labor uprising of 1877 not only generated working-class political activity across the country but spawned numerous strikes as well. The most significant of these, and one that directly raised the subject of Chinese labor, occurred in New York City in the fall, when cigar makers struck to abolish the tenement-house system of labor. The cigar-making industry had been one of the hardest hit by the depression. Not only had wages been slashed twice in the past two years and thousands of cigar makers laid off, but manufacturers had introduced a wooden mold earlier in the decade to speed up production. The mold also led to the deskilling of jobs and consequently the massive hiring of immigrants, women, and minors. "About one-third of the cigar operatives," the New York Tribune noted, "are young children." Many of these children prepared the tobacco and rolled cigars with their parents (and grandparents) in squalid tenement houses on the lower east side of Manhattan. Families, many of them Bohemian, both lived and worked in these tenement-house factories owned by landlord employers. Unorganized and laboring fourteen to sixteen hours a day, they were among the city's most exploited laborers. This

tenement-house competition further depressed the trade, and by 1877 union membership had declined from a high of nearly 4,000 to a mere 500. The national railroad strike, however, spurred labor militancy, and after two small but successful strikes among organized cigar makers over the summer, tenement-house workers walked out en masse in October 1877. Samuel Gompers, president of the local, decried this "reckless precipitate action" taken without approval of the union's executive committee, but he and fellow union leaders moved rapidly to organize the strikers. Higher wages and abolition of the tenement-house system became everyone's rallying cry.²²

Cigar makers held strategy sessions once and twice a day and began picketing the major companies. A boisterous rally on October 30 so packed Cooper Union with 3,000 strikers that an even larger overflow meeting had to be held outside. Mass rallies, supported by all the city's trades, became commonplace events, conducted in English, German, and Bohemian. Adolph Strasser, president of the Cigar Makers' International Union, oversaw these meetings as well as numerous demonstrations, and he helped organize a nationwide campaign to support the strike. By late October 15,000 cigar makers had joined the walkout. Many lacked savings of any kind but help poured in at once from unions across the country. Workers held mass meetings to raise funds in Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, San Francisco, and numerous

other cities. Up to five hundred dollars arrived daily at strike headquarters in New York, money that was spent as quickly as it came in. Cigar makers set up "relief kitchens" to provide food, fuel, and medical assistance. They also distributed small cash benefits to strikers. Despite this broad support and continued defiance, manufacturers refused to budge an inch. They defended the tenement-house system and retaliated by instituting lockouts and evicting workers from their homes. "The distress that followed was appalling," Gompers later wrote, as employers threw impoverished families onto the street. Cigar makers knew they were in for the long haul.²³

One of the remarkable features of the strike was its solidarity, both by gender and by nationality. Women especially played key roles in the walkout. They appeared at every meeting, marched on every picket line, and were regularly arrested for strike activity. Mary Heisler, the union's Bohemian-speaking vice-president, was among the cigar makers' most riveting orators, outdone only by Anna Seidel, "a young lady of prepossessing appearance," the New York Herald noted, who at one rally "rattled off a brilliant speech." The strikers were primarily German, Bohemian, and native-born, but included in their ranks Cuban, Spanish, and Chinese workers. Although virtually ignored by the mainstream press, working-class journals highlighted this ethnic cohesiveness. "Even CHINAMEN," noted the New York

Labor Standard during the first week of the walkout, "have asserted their manhood in this strike and have risen to the dignity of the American trade unionists." Demanding higher wages, four Chinese cigar makers joined their co-workers in marching out of the factory of Wangler & Hahn. Another walked out at Jacoby's establishment. These may have been among the Chinese who applied for relief from the strike committee and, for reasons not explained, received an extra dollar in rations. In joining the strike, the Labor Standard commented, the Chinese "showed themselves capable of real civilization." The striking Chinese appeared as both a novelty and curiosity. But they were also a source for inspiration, emboldening workers in other states. Writing in October, John D. McCormick, a potter from Trenton, New Jersey, felt that this solidarity ensured success:

We have read with great satisfaction of the noble and determined stand taken by the cigarmakers of New York against the unjust and oppressive measures of their employers. We hope and believe that victory will crown their efforts. The numbers who have joined the great uprising of the cigarmakers, the rapidity with which the movement is spreading, and the fact that both sexes, and even the Chinamen have asserted their rights, affords ample evidence that the wrongs they seek to redress have been patiently and long endured, and that their demands are moderate and just.²⁴

But the strike had an ugly side as well. Within days of the walkout rumors swirled that manufacturers had wired California for Chinese laborers. "Holtzman & Deutsenberger," the Tribune noted on October 19, "will

employ Chinese if the old workmen do not return to work." An unnamed "San Francisco firm," the report continued, "had promised from 200 to 400 Chinese. The news caused great excitement among the strikers." Workers had reason to be excited: After the shoe industry, cigar making was the trade hardest hit by Chinese laborers on the West Coast. Chinese often underbid white workers in San Francisco and in some cigar factories completely dominated the labor force. In early November the Herald claimed that the rumor of imported Chinese workers "is fully confirmed." Wangler & Hahn desired strikebreakers, the Herald added, and Straiton & Storm, one of the city's largest manufacturers, planned to spend \$40,000 "on the experiment." Straiton & Storm, the Herald stated, had hired 300 Chinese workers on a one-year contract to work in their factory: "it is not so much a question of prices as whether or not they shall have control of their own shops, since they cannot get non-union men, they will engage experienced Chinese workmen, any number of whom can be had in San Francisco." Some workers dismissed the report. The Cigar Makers' Official Journal, the union's mouthpiece, called the threat "ridiculous," nothing more than a "scarecrow" to frighten strikers. A cigar maker from Troy, New York, agreed, noting that "wages are so low, that no people in the world would take their places--not even the Chinese." Union president Strasser himself stated that he

"did not fear any incursion in this city of Chinese workmen...."25

Rumors persisted, however, and the specter loomed of a second North Adams. Manufacturers used these rumors to drive a wedge between strikers. One manufacturer hired a Chinese immigrant merely "to walk in and out of his factory, endeavoring to make the pickets believe that the Chinaman had already arrived from San Francisco." Kerbs & Speis went further. They hired several scabs, dressed them "as Chinamen," and made them wear pigtails. The Cigar Makers' Official Journal discovered the ruse and printed their identities. "Let them be branded indelibly," the Journal declared. Manufacturers' ploys, rumors, and threats appealed to the lowest instincts in workers--and paid off. Strikers began calling scabs "Chinamen." In the yard of one shop workers hanged a scab in effigy bearing the label: "So we will serve every Chinaman." And when one family broke ranks and returned to a tenement house in early January, "they were saluted with cries of 'Chinamen'...."26

Manufacturers had rediscovered a potent weapon to intimidate workers: the exploitation of racial and ethnic tensions. But traditional methods of crushing resistance remained more effective. With the diminution of strike funds and the onset of winter, manufacturers launched their final offensive in December. They expanded the lockout and fired key workers. These actions, Gompers wrote, broke "the

financial backbone of the strike." After 107 days, the strike collapsed in late January. "It was," Gompers recalled more than forty years later, "a wonderful fight" filled with "heroic sacrifices." He labeled it "the great strike," and "an important turning point in the history of the Cigar Makers' Union...." In enumerating the strike's accomplishments--tighter organization, centralized leadership, and authorized benefits (i.e., a union based on strict hierarchy)--Gompers conveniently omitted the ethnic infighting and ethnic solidarity. A lifetime of union struggles may well have chastened him. But at the time, ethnic cohesiveness--or lack thereof--was one of the key lessons the strike taught. A Philadelphia cigar maker had counseled workers not to let differences in nationality or language hinder unity. Shortly thereafter, the Cigar Makers' Official Journal noted that a local composed of Cubans, Spaniards, Chinese, and blacks waged a successful strike, only because "appeals to national prejudices ... were in vain."²⁷

The great cigar makers' strike of 1877-78 had shown both the strength and fragility of inter-ethnic and interracial unity. When exacerbated by manufacturers' threats and race-baiting tactics, anti-Chinese sentiment could come to the fore. Otherwise it remained dormant, nascent, checked. Tensions, to be sure, existed. "There is," the Journal noted, "perhaps no other trade which

embraces such a mixed element." Yet it is surprising that amidst these myriad tensions and ongoing threats to import Chinese laborers, neither the union nor its members called for immigration restriction or Chinese exclusion. Opposition focused on manufacturers' use of Chinese as imported workmen and strikebreakers. As the Journal noted a few months later, the heterogeneous union "invites all cigarmakers, skilled or unskilled without any distinction of color, sex, nationality or creed to rally under its banner...." The New York Labor Standard was equally direct. In recounting the highlights of the strike the journal noted: "That was a glorious moment for labor when Bohemians, Germans, English, and even Chinese, clung to each other for support and learned that in union only is there strength."²⁸

While eastern workers remained largely unconcerned with Chinese immigration, and while Chinese, native- and European-born workers "clung to each other," if only temporarily, other forces in society were being marshalled to drive the Chinese out. In September 1877, former Representative Edwin R. Meade, a New York Democrat who had served on the Congressional committee to investigate Chinese immigration, delivered a paper at the annual meeting of the American Social Science Association in Saratoga, New York. This twelve-year-old organization of middle-class

humanitarians, patrician reformers, and leading Republican intellectuals, gathered regularly both to discuss current events and social problems and to suggest ameliorative actions. Meade's topic was Chinese immigration. Attacking the Chinese on moral, economic, and racial grounds, he recommended total exclusion. The paper provoked a heated exchange. A Dr. Harris agreed with Meade, adding that the Chinese propagated disease. Others were not so sure. A Reverend Fessenden of Connecticut noted there were some Chinese students at Yale and they should be welcomed. (A colleague, however, Amherst Professor Julius H. Seelye, a Republican Representative from Massachusetts who had traveled in China, felt the Burlingame Treaty a "one-sided affair" and favored restriction.) Others at the Social Science meeting favored Chinese immigration but not without qualification. A Mr. Lord of Michigan "thought there were points in the Chinese question which require careful investigation. We cannot hoot the Chinese out of the country, but must consider their case in the several aspects which it presents." And Franklin B. Sanborn, aging abolitionist and the Association's founder and secretary, simply considered the question moot as the Chinese "were not an emigrating people." Leading economist David A. Wells, former president of the Social Science Association, was less sanguine. He feared the impact of large numbers of Chinese immigrants who would not conform to American ways. "A stone

in the stomach of the body-politic," he felicitously remarked, "which will neither digest nor assimilate." In time, Wells added, "they would have ... to get out of our way."²⁹

Other prominent intellectuals added their voices to the cry for restriction. "I confess to a very deep-seated dread of this influx of Asiatics," wrote Andrew D. White, president of Cornell University. The Rev. Charles Hodge, meanwhile, president of Princeton University, called "the evil ... so great" that "something surely ought to be done." In January 1878 the conservative North American Review, the nation's oldest magazine, published an article that hysterically denounced the Chinese. Assimilation, religion, morality, and cleanliness, the author M.J. Dee argued, "were not of the slightest consequence." It was simply a matter of cold, hard facts. "All that we have to do," the author stated, "is to determine whether, according to the strict limitations of the natural law of evolution he [the Chinese] is better 'fitted' to survive in the environment of this continent than its present Caucasian inhabitant." His answer emphatically was yes. "Of all the varieties of man," the article claimed, "the Chinaman is the most diverse in his food. All is meat to him.... He can gorge himself with joy upon the abundant meat-diet of the Englishman; he can dine comfortably and happily upon a brace of mice, or eke out life, for weeks, upon handfuls of rice.... He can pack

more of his kind upon an acre of ground than any New York tenement-life can show, and live there in what he regards as tolerable comfort." The article rejected "sentimental" humanitarianism and attempted to place the issue of Chinese immigration on a strict scientific basis. Couched in the language of Malthusian economics and Social Darwinism, the article explained how for thousands of years Asians had struggled for existence in overpopulated regions. They had learned to live on less and adapt to "the conditions of savage life." Simply put, "the Chinaman can live and accumulate a surplus where the Caucasian would starve." It was nothing less than a matter of survival:

It is really, therefore, those characteristics of the Chinaman which we most despise--his miserable little figure, his pinched and wretched way of living, his slavish and tireless industry, his indifference to high and costly pleasures which our civilization almost makes necessities, his capacity to live in swarms in wretched dens where the white man would rot, if he did not suffocate--all these make him a most formidable rival for ultimate survival as the fittest, not only in America, but wherever he may find a footing.

Modern science could thus supply a strong "objective" argument for exclusion based on the "natural" dangers of Chinese immigration. The American Social Science Association, university presidents, and the North American Review may not, of course, be completely representative of their class (just as labor journals and spokesmen may not have represented theirs), but they do reveal that Chinese immigration was an issue on which "respectable" opinion

could disagree. The educated and elite could be as emphatically opposed to the Chinese as anyone.³⁰

As eastern patricians debated the issue at conferences and in journals, Californians again took the offensive. Sand lot meetings became increasingly vicious as the autumn progressed. "Before you and before the world," Denis Kearney proclaimed in October 1877, "we declare that the Chinaman must leave our shores. We declare that white men, and women, and boys, and girls, cannot live as the people of the great republic should and compete with the single Chinese coolie in the labor market.... Death is preferable to an American to life on a par with the Chinaman." At one night-time meeting, Kearney inveighed listeners to hang government officials, burn down the mansions of the rich, and "cut the capitalists to pieces." He was arrested shortly after for "incendiary language." A protest meeting led to further arrests, but the cases were dismissed. A massive Thanksgiving Day demonstration drew 10,000 people, at which speakers, resolutions, and banners called for an end to Chinese immigration. One transparency portrayed Uncle Sam beside a Chinese immigrant. "The Mongol bore a broadsword, [labeled] 'The industries of the United States,'" the San Francisco Chronicle noted, "while his queue was coiled like a boa constrictor around poor Uncle Sam, who was gasping for breath." Another showed a scale with America on one side, China on the other, with the

caption, "The Press our lever and public opinion our fulcrum."³¹

Spurred by this outpouring of anti-Chinese activity, the California State Senate sent a "memorial" to Congress demanding the exclusion of all Chinese residents. This was a measure, the document stated, supported by all Californians. Governor Irwin agreed, and in December delivered a strong speech outlining the "evils" of Chinese immigration and the danger of Asian civilization overrunning America. California Congressman Horace Page wrote a lengthy letter to President Hayes urging immediate action. Even the New York Tribune conceded the issue's broad popularity on the Pacific Coast. "Eastern tourists, visiting California," the staunch Republican journal noted, "have ... seldom failed to return strongly impressed with the unanimity of sentiment upon the subject which they found to exist there, and with the arguments of people, whose intelligence raised them above a vulgar hatred of an inferior race." These developments led the Tribune, which had been largely sympathetic to Chinese immigration, to rethink its position: "The time has evidently come when the Chinese question has grown to such an importance as to demand from Congress a more careful examination than it has heretofore received.... If Chinese labor is a tithe of the evil it is pictured to be, then it is time that the fact was known to the whole country, and a remedy found and applied."³²

Three weeks later the Tribune highlighted a visit to Washington, D.C., by Darius Ogden Mills, president of the Bank of California. The banker met with "several leading public men," the Tribune noted, who questioned him on the Chinese. Mills praised the Asian immigrants. "They are industrious and peaceable," he said, and they work cheap. But he admitted they presented a problem. "It might be well," the banker said, "for Congress to check temporarily the flow of Chinese emigration...." Despite this comment, the Tribune editorialized that Mills was "strongly in favor of the Chinese."³³ Perhaps so. But the difference between pro- and anti-Chinese attitudes was becoming increasingly murky.

This chain reaction of events--sand lot meetings in San Francisco, actions by California politicians, and increasing doubts among the influential in the East--approached a climax during the winter of 1877-78 as the 45th Congress convened in Washington. "The delegates from the Pacific Coast," the New York Labor Standard noted in October, "... declare their intention of forcing legislation on the Chinese question during the coming session." Indeed, during its opening weeks Congressmen introduced almost a dozen separate anti-Chinese bills. Most called for immigration restriction or outright exclusion. One would have barred employment of Chinese laborers on any public works in the United States. Senator Sargent thought a head tax of \$250

on each incoming Chinese citizen would effectively limit their entry. While Congress discussed the subject so did the executive branch. At a Cabinet meeting on January 18, 1878, President Hayes and his advisors reviewed various options. "The President," the Chicago Times reported the next day, "is of opinion that a great influx of Chinese immigrants to this country is impolitic and ought to be restricted." Hayes rejected Sargent's idea of a head tax, preferring instead a renegotiation of the Burlingame Treaty to allow the United States to regulate Chinese immigration.³⁴

Congress took up the president's suggestion. In February the House Committee on Education and Labor recommended that the president open treaty negotiations with China. Sargent urged the Senate to go along. On March 7 he delivered a long, venomous speech against the Chinese, decrying everything from their alleged paganism, immorality, and filthiness, to their clothing, language, and illiteracy. Glorifying free labor and attacking low wages, Sargent invoked the usual arguments and capitulated much of what he had said two years earlier. Only now his statements were cloaked with the authority of a Congressional investigation. Debate followed in committee and on the floor. Two months later, Wisconsin Senator Timothy O. Howe, a leading Republican on the Foreign Relations Committee, submitted a resolution calling for a new treaty so that "the

unrestricted emigration to this country from China might wisely be modified...." Former Vice-President Hannibal Hamlin [R-ME] had drafted the wording. The Senate passed the resolution on May 25, and the House on June 17, so that by the spring of 1878, both the executive and legislative branches of the federal government had committed themselves to the restriction of Chinese immigration.³⁵

This commitment by the President and by Congress marks a milestone in the anti-Chinese movement. The ongoing agitation on the West Coast had at last succeeded in winning over a powerful ally--the federal government. Another key factor prodding politicians into action in early 1878 was the alarming growth of the Greenback-Labor party. Having polled 187,000 votes the previous fall (double their 1876 tally), organizers predicted that the next Congressional elections would catapult them to power. They generated enormous enthusiasm throughout the winter and spring, and Greenback journals sprouted up everywhere. Nicknamed the "rag baby"--an allusion to paper money--the Greenbackers threatened to make major inroads on the established parties. Although an entrenched two-party system had been in place in the U.S. for more than half a century, the Republican party was less than a generation old; the Grand Old Party's longevity was by no means assured. As Greenbackers liked to point out, the Republican party had already achieved its goals--emancipation, prosecution of the war, and

reconstruction--and was destined to soon die out. The Greenbackers, on the other hand, with such modern issues as finance and currency, focused on concerns of the day and represented the wave of the future. Even the ceaseless ridicule they encountered evoked the abuse Republicans had faced in the 1850s and reinforced their sense of purpose. In an era distinguished by razor-thin elections, the Greenbackers posed a genuine threat: Whether as a potential second-party replacement or simply a nettlesome third-party power-broker, the Greenbackers presented a viable alternative in a period of massive economic dislocation and great social unrest.³⁶

The party's major convention of 1878 met in Toledo, Ohio, on Washington's Birthday. Delegates from twenty-eight states, including three from California, adopted a series of principles and resolutions that became known as the "Toledo platform." It contained no surprises. It opposed bankers, monopolists, and professional politicians, one speaker noted, as well as "the rich bondholder, who is drawing the life-blood out of the industries and business of the country that he may live in idleness and luxury...." The Greenbackers wanted his wealth taxed just like "the mortgaged home of the underpaid or unemployed laborer." The platform stressed economic and monetary issues. It endorsed greenbacks, of course, and at the urging of Ben Butler, a Republican Congressman showing increasing interest in the

new party, delegates "indignantly condemn[ed] ... as a delusion" the recently-passed Bland-Allison Act, a watered-down version of a bill originally intended to boost silver production and the money supply. The platform also included a host of working-class reforms, such as eight-hour legislation, abolition of prison labor, a graduated income tax, land reform, state and national bureaus of labor statistics, and "the full employment of labor." The last of the thirteen planks made a reference to the Chinese: "The importation of servile labor into the United States from China is a problem of the most serious importance, and we recommend legislation looking to its suppression."

Greenbackers, like the working classes, emphasized the problem of imported labor, not immigration. Delegates at Toledo, in either speeches or resolutions, made no other references to Chinese immigration.³⁷

The Toledo platform became the Greenbackers' rallying cry for the next two years. Only three of the party's dozens of newspapers failed to endorse it. The Irish World, for example, called it "weak, vague, and evasive" filled with "specious generalities."³⁸ This, however, was the exception, as Greenbackers overwhelmingly supported it, invoked it, and advertised it. Convention after convention in states and counties adopted it, from Maine to Massachusetts to Ohio to Illinois to Michigan. Some conventions supplemented the platform with planks of special

concern, such as woman suffrage and opposition to a standing army. None, however, modified the Greenbackers' stand on the Chinese. Most speakers, in fact, ignored the plank altogether, concentrating instead on finance and labor reform. Indeed, the pro-labor planks of the platform were clearly designed to attract the votes of workers who were loathe to align with the more radical Socialist or Workingmen's parties. The Greenbackers undoubtedly enjoyed some working-class support. Organizers included such prominent trade unionists as Robert Blissert, John Ennis, and George Blair, as well as Knights of Labor leader Terence V. Powderly, a Greenbacker who would be elected mayor of Scranton, Pennsylvania, later in the year. Samuel Gompers had voted the Greenback ticket in 1876 and claimed he was followed by "practically all the wage-earners of New York." As the Oshkosh, Wisconsin Greenback Standard noted in May 1878, this "party is composed of two elements--currency reformers, and rights of labor advocates." But these "rights of labor advocates" made no attempt to lure workers with anti-Chinese rhetoric. On the rare occasions when the subject came up, Greenbackers emphasized importation, not immigration. Samuel F. Cary, for example, in listing sixteen reasons why workers should support the Greenback party, said: "It demands that while this country shall continue to be an asylum for the oppressed of all lands, and give equal protection to all emigrants, the importation of

servile labor shall be prohibited and the offence be severely punished." [Emphasis in original.] Such a strategy seemed to be paying off as the party swept a host of local elections in the spring of 1878 and fielded candidates in thirty-one (of thirty-eight) states for the upcoming Congressional elections. One organizer took credit for chartering 4,000 separate Greenback clubs and claimed membership was "'increasing faster than ever before.'" The Greenback threat was real--in fact, in 1878, it was at its height. Mainstream politicians needed a way to steal their thunder. Mass circulation of paper money, eight-hour legislation, and other reforms remained an apostasy to most national lawmakers. Chinese immigration restriction, however, offered an alternative. Eliminating the distinction between immigration and importation, politicians conceived an issue that could rally voters to their cause and perhaps defuse the Greenback fervor.³⁹

As senators and representatives scrambled to climb aboard the anti-Chinese bandwagon, the working classes remained as divided--or indifferent--as ever. In October 1877 when Congress began debating the issue anew, the working classes sent two lengthy petitions to Washington. One, signed by "a large number of mechanics and laborers," urged shorter hours and better treatment for government employees. Another, which Representative Hendrick B. Wright said was signed by over 20,000 workingmen, asked for small

government loans to help people settle on public lands. Neither petition mentioned Chinese laborers. Workers simply did not mobilize around the issue. Divisions among them may account for the reason, for as consensus for immigration restriction began to emerge in Washington during the winter, the labor press continued to reflect a diversity of views. In mid-December, just as the autumn's activities on the West Coast had reached their peak, the New York Labor Standard acknowledged: "The main spirit permeating the masses at these [sand lot] meetings seems to have been strongly anti-Chinese...." The Labor Standard frowned on the meetings, calling the sinophobic propaganda "wild and unwise." Maintaining its position of years past, the journal argued that scapegoating the Chinese only distracted workers from genuine problems. After all, "it should be remembered that in New York and other cities where there is no Chinese competition, the workingpeople are no better off and are in competition with each other. The evil competitive system under which we live forces not only Chinese and whites but whites and whites and blacks and blacks in competition with each other." Ethnic rivalry offered no solution. Unity was the only answer. "The evils of Chinese or white competition cannot be removed by any local agitation," the Labor Standard concluded, "but will only give way before the organized power of the wage workers of the entire country." The journal reiterated these sentiments two months later.

The existence of low wages "is not confined to California, but prevails all over, just as well where there are no Chinese as where there are." Unlike President Hayes, whose cabinet members had discussed the issue just a few weeks earlier, the Labor Standard did not suggest immigration restriction or treaty revision as a remedy. "The problem of cheap labor," the journal stated clearly, "Whether it be Chinese or white, will be satisfactorily solved by the National and International combination of labor."⁴⁰

To achieve this goal, Joseph P. McDonnell, editor of the Labor Standard, and others organized the International Labor Union. A similar but more radical version of the National Labor Union of the late 1860s and early '70s, the I.L.U. aimed to mobilize the working classes into a mass organization. Its aims and measures included the usual labor planks of eight hours, bureaus of labor statistics, and the abolition of contract prison and child labor. Chinese immigration remained conspicuously absent. Such absence, however, should not be taken as indifference. The I.L.U. and the Labor Standard were by no means impervious to the commotion on the West Coast. In February the journal inaugurated a three-part series entitled "California." Written by San Franciscan John M. Days, each of these articles mentioned the "dangers" posed by the Chinese. The series stressed importation as the enemy, but nonetheless had a strong anti-Chinese slant. The Labor Standard also

printed letters from West Coast correspondents, many of which invariably criticized Chinese laborers. It is, however, most surprising how little impact this onslaught had on the Labor Standard and its readers. Even though the journal began to use the newly-popularized verb "Chineize"--meaning to lower wages and tame workers--its editors consistently tried to downplay the issue.⁴¹ Only West Coast correspondents dwelled on the Chinese. Letters from subscribers east of the Rockies scarcely ever mentioned the subject, and when they did it was in the context of imported labor, not merely its ethnicity. Note, for example, the words of "A Factory Slave," written from Fall River, Massachusetts, in December 1877. Cognizant of recent labor history, the operative recalled "the manufacturers in North Adams importing Chinamen to take the place of strikers" in 1870, and compared it to "the [present] efforts of the cigar manufacturers in New York, also the contractors in London how they are importing Americans, Germans and Italians, in order to reduce the pay and break up the Unions of the masons there." The lesson taught by these disparate events, "A Factory Slave" concluded, was not immigration restriction but working-class organization:

The Labor question is not a local or hardly a national one but International in all its interests and bearings. No better evidence is needed of this fact than the way capitalists import workmen from one locality and even one country to another in order to thwart the objects of workmen everywhere in improving their condition.⁴²

Fall River labor leader George Gunton agreed. He attacked imported labor, Chinese and otherwise. Remarking on a Boston Herald advertisement for American workers "to go nobsticking [strikebreaking] in Europe," Gunton decried the prospect of "Republican laborers ... being shipped in cargoes like cattle to fill the place of struggling operatives in Europe...."⁴³ The Labor Standard took the same stand, calling such actions "a singular and sad sight." "It is odious-infamous," the journal said, "this scandalous traffic should end." The "importation of foreign cheap labor"--whether from Asia, Europe, or America--was equally evil.⁴⁴

The Labor Standard made careful efforts not to cross the line from importation to immigration restriction and clearly emphasized the difference. "The cry that the 'Chinese must go' is both narrow and unjust," an editorial stated on June 30, 1878. "It represents no broad or universal principle." Rather, it resembled the old nativist cry of the Know Nothings which was "intolerant, silly, and shameful." The collapse of the Know Nothings taught a lesson. "In our day we must commit no such blunders," the Labor Standard declared, "... we have no right to raise a cry against any class of human beings because of their nationality." British operatives--faced with imported American labor--provided an example: "the [English] workingmen have distinctly stated that they welcome

workingmen from all nations, and that their warfare is only against the system of low wages and all those who support it." The Labor Standard continued in this vein and ultimately concluded:

Let our first stand be against those rich and intelligent thieves who strive to perpetuate and establish a system of overwork and starvation pay. And then against all those, whether they be Chinese or American, Irish or English, French or German, Spanish or Italian who refuse to co-operate with us for their good and ours, and that of the whole human family.... We favor every effort against the conspiracy of the rich to import cheap labor from Europe or Asia, but we warn the workingmen that no action but International Labor Action, and no cry but that of high wages and short hours will lead us into the promised land of peace, plenty and happiness.⁴⁵

As if to underscore this ecumenicalism, the Labor Standard printed during the spring and summer of 1878 a variety of human interest stories on life in China. Some were negative, such as a grisly account of the crucifixion of a criminal who had led a prostitution ring, and others were neutral, such as a brief piece on the poor accommodations found at a Chinese inn. But most were positive and instructive. One described currency in China. Another focused on street life in a Chinese metropolis. A third, called "Precepts from a Chinese Philosopher," included nine Confucian-type proverbs covering such upstanding ideals as virtue, goodness, and the Golden Rule. It was hardly the stuff to fan anti-Chinese hatred. Whether in editorials, news briefs, or scattered filler articles, the Labor Standard backed no campaign to exclude Chinese

workers and evinced little interest in immigration restriction.⁴⁶

Another journal, the Detroit Socialist, also appealed to a working-class audience. It printed occasional articles on the "evils" caused by Chinese laborers and their wretched living conditions. In March 1878 a Philadelphian wrote a harsh letter criticizing Chinese immigration, quoting heavily from the Congressional investigation. Brief but equally hostile articles followed in the next month. This led one subscriber, B.E.G. Jewett of Evansville, Indiana, to request a change in direction. "In the first place," Jewett wrote, "... cease to combat the Chinamen as a class...."

The Chinese, he declared, must not be the target:

What we want to fight is, not the Chinese nor any other imported stock, be they Durham bulls or Spanish mules--be they men, women or babies, but we want to fight the importers, persons who, ministering to their own greed, to the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, sell (or contract) into bondage the labor of others, and drive still others into deeper degradation and poverty.

Then, in perhaps the most impassioned defense of open immigration yet made, Jewett stated:

The Chinamen coming here of his own accord and at his own expense of accumulated earnings, has as much right here as you or any German, Russ, Switzer, Frank, Turk, Pole, Irish or Ethiopian in the land; and true Socialism demands that as air, land and water are eternally free to the whole race who wish to live, they shall NOT be debarred that privilege [sic].

The Socialist scarcely responded. Nor did the rest of the labor press. The National Socialist, a new publication from Cincinnati, printed a letter from a Californian two months

later claiming that "Jewett does not understand our Chinese trouble." The Californian's solution to the problem was simply to impose an income tax on the Chinese which, he claimed, would equalize wages with whites. Another journal, the St. Louis Communist, practically ignored the issue entirely. It took note only to endorse the platform of the Socialistic Labor Party which denounced importation. Otherwise it remained mute. Thus the labor press revealed a wide range of opinion on Chinese immigration. As Congress and the president moved slowly but intently toward restriction no consensus had yet emerged in the working-class press.⁴⁷

The period following the national railroad strike was an unusual one in American history. The labor uprising had propelled the nation into a new era, one many Americans did not understand, with problems they did not want to recognize. Class conflict had long been considered a European phenomenon, not one that existed in a free, expanding republic. The violence of July 1877, however, brutally called these assumptions into question, and the media responded with uncharacteristic vigor. After years of little more than scattered articles on working-class activity, the mainstream press suddenly abounded with reports of union meetings, transcriptions of radical speeches, and interviews with the rank and file. The "labor

question" entered the national arena turbulently, and Americans searched for answers and explanations. This heightened interest in the "labor question" had an unexpected consequence: the first red scare in American history. Unlike later red scares which have been well documented, such as those following the Haymarket bombing in 1886, McKinley's assassination in 1901, and the two world wars later in the twentieth century, the red scare of 1878 has received little attention. Perhaps because no one was killed, few were arrested, and no publications suppressed, this red scare has escaped notice. But in the spring of 1878 it was the dominant topic of conversation and interest as fears of a communist uprising electrified the nation.

The immediate origins of the red scare lay in Chicago. Following the election of Socialist Frank Stauber to the City Council in April, the Chicago Tribune started printing articles on "The Dangers of Communism." So did the Chicago Inter-Ocean. Alarmed by "the recent performances of the Commune," the Inter-Ocean reported that citizens had contacted the military "to ascertain how far the city could depend on the army in case of trouble with the Communists." Reports of armed Socialists drilling on vacant lots fueled fears later in the month. With the uprising of the previous summer still fresh in people's minds, both journals urged reinforcement of the local militia. "There is distrust, dissatisfaction, discontent about us everywhere," the Inter-

Ocean noted. "Communism proper has little to do with it, but a common feeling of disgust, discouragement, and uncertainty feeds the flame that makes the communistic kettle boil, and increases the temptation hourly." Rumor and fear fed on each other and the red scare quickly spread to other cities. Newspapers reported Socialists armed and carrying out maneuvers in St. Louis, Cincinnati, Cleveland, and New York. Up north, labor violence racked the cities of Montreal and Quebec. Washington buzzed as politicians talked of "communist ... mischief" racing across the country. No one was sure when the uprising would take place, but many fixed on June 16 as the date for a general work stoppage to be followed by a revolution. The press teemed with anti-communist editorials and articles. The New York Herald and World blamed foreign-born radicals. "They are the reddest of Red Republicans," the World wrote, "professional revolutionists ... implacable enemies to the republican form of government...." They "maintain correspondence with communists all over the world," the article noted. "To them the Tompkins square meetings were mere child's play, and the outbreak of the railroad strikers of last year but a mild warning of the reign of terror to come." Pro-labor journals were no less frightened. "[A] Communistic movement of alarming proportions has been inaugurated," the Boston Globe noted in May. It was planning "hostilities against law and order ... [and] having

for an object a grand division of property, irrespective of ownership." The Globe printed lengthy reports of communist activity in Chicago, Pittsburgh, St. Louis, and San Francisco as well as in Omaha, Nebraska, Parkersburg, West Virginia, and Brownsville, Texas. Revolutionists, it seemed, were everywhere. As the New York Herald commented, "we find the rural press laden with articles on Communists and the terrible, awful, gigantic fee-to-fum that is to upset society in a few days."⁴⁸

Radicals and workers dismissed all such talk of imminent revolution. In interviews, Chicago Socialists "ridicule[d] the idea of any uprising by their people," calling such charges "absurd" and "senseless verbiage." Albert Parsons remarked that the red scare was a capitalist ruse designed to expand the military. He had a point. In early June Major William Frew of Standard Oil in Pittsburgh called for 500 troops in case of labor unrest. A week earlier Chicago merchants had demanded the army be bolstered with 100,000 new recruits. And General William Tecumseh Sherman, the United States' top military official, assured the nation that the army was prepared for any emergency. Nothing, of course, happened. On June 16, the date of the expected uprising, most of America's cities remained calm. Chicago, however, witnessed a spectacular demonstration. With red flags waving, 5,000 workers representing upholsterers, cigar makers, wood-carvers, picture-frame

makers, brewery workers, and other trades, marched with banners in English, German, Bohemian, and Scandinavian languages. A "tramp delegation" marched with them. By mid-afternoon 25,000 people swarmed Ogden's Grove for a massive picnic. It was a day for festivity, speech-making, and solidarity. As the usually hostile Chicago Times commented, "Socialists saw an object of the picnic in tending to break up all differences of nationality and creed. All meet on the common level of manhood." Equally significant, the Times added, "perfect order" prevailed. No strike was called. No violence occurred. No revolution broke out. Reports of calm in Detroit, Toledo, and Buffalo convinced the Times and other papers that threats of an uprising may have been unduly exaggerated. A few days later, however, the Workingmen's Party of California--running against a fusion ticket of Republicans and Democrats--won a large number of seats in the election for the state constitutional convention. The prospect of "communists" rewriting a government charter sent shock waves through the Eastern press and reinvigorated the red scare.⁴⁹

Due to the red scare in 1878, the mainstream press focused tremendous attention on working-class movements and meetings. A good deal of information thus exists detailing workers' demands and concerns during the first half of the year. A surprising aspect is that workers showed remarkably little interest in the red scare itself. While some

Socialists did discuss arming, most working-class meetings ignored completely the rumored uprising. They also ignored Chinese immigration. Surveying more than eighty working-class meetings, marches, and interviews from the Atlantic to the Rockies reported in the New York Herald and Chicago Times, the two most comprehensive newspapers of the period, as well as the Boston Globe, the Washington Star, and other journals, no more than a tiny handful ever mentioned Chinese immigration. These meetings and interviews run the gamut of working-class events: assemblies of bricklayers, plasterers, machinists, blacksmiths, painters, tailors, shoemakers, and cigar makers in New York; a mass rally of the unemployed numbering over 10,000 in Boston; Workingmen's and Socialist party gatherings in Albany, Boston, Lawrence, Chicago, St. Louis, and New York; strike meetings among coalminers in Missouri and Pennsylvania and among coopers in Chicago; interviews with radicals in Cleveland and Manhattan; working-class parades and festivals in Chicago, New York, and Brooklyn; and regular union gatherings such as the National Convention of Turners in Cleveland and the International Typographical Union in Detroit.⁵⁰

The main issues expressed at this vast array of events had not changed much from the preceding year. Reduced hours, higher wages, payment in cash (rather than scrip), abolition of prison and child labor, workers' compensation, factory inspections, homestead reform, state and national

bureaus of labor statistics, lien laws, universal suffrage, and the right to organize, dominated the working-class agenda. Fierce denunciations of capitalism, "wage slavery," and political corruption peppered hundreds of speeches as workers made their voices heard. Noticeably absent was Chinese immigration. The exceptional occasions when the subject did arise reveal little more than fleeting references, demeaning though they were. A Mr. Sevey, for example, editor of the Fall River Labor Journal, told a group of protesting mill workers in February: "The Chinese lived on rice and rats, and slept 50 to a room on the floor, and hence are worthless as buyers of goods. Our people do not wish to be reduced to this condition." George McNeill made a similar comment a month later. At a labor rally in Philadelphia in June, Joseph P. McDonnell "counciled organization as the only remedy. If the working people will not organize we would come down to the level of the Chinese. In fact we are being Chineseized by low wages and long hours, and we can expect every day to hear of Americans living on rats and rice." These were powerful images, to be sure, but were invoked primarily to inspire workers to organize unions, not to oust the Chinese. Vicious as such comments were, they paled beside those of Edwin Meade, the North American Review, and various politicians in Congress. They were distinguished foremost by their rarity.⁵¹

The key point is that amid a looming red scare and heaps of publicity, the working classes were thrust into the national spotlight, and they seldom addressed the issue of Chinese immigration. And when they did the results were inconclusive. The National Workingmen's Assembly provides a prime example. Organized in Washington, D.C., in October 1877, this working-class body consisted of members from over two dozen trades from printers, bookbinders, and paperhangers, to plumbers, gas-fitters, and navy yard workers. The N.W.A. had three main goals: mutual protection of workers; repeal of all oppressive labor laws; and advancement of pro-labor legislation. Their location in the nation's capital, members hoped, would give them unique access to lawmakers. In its first year, the National Workingmen's Association lobbied Congress for eight-hour enforcement, apprenticeship and lien laws, and a national bureau of labor statistics. They discussed a variety of issues and transacted other business, such as applauding a penny-a-meal soup-house, urging later reading hours for the Library of Congress, sending money to the striking New York City cigar makers, and approving a twenty-five-dollar loan for Elizabeth Cady Stanton.⁵² In all their various discussions and debates reported faithfully each week by the Washington Star throughout 1877 and 1878, Chinese immigration surfaced exactly twice. On March 20, 1878, J.H. Ralston, the Assembly's secretary, praised Senator Sargent

for his recent speech in Congress. Chinese immigration, Ralston said, "was rapidly becoming one of vital importance to the whole country. American labor was entirely ruined by the Chinese article." A Mr. Robertson stood up and objected sharply. Conditions were just as bad in New England as in California, he stated. The Chinese were not to blame. Robertson said he "was sorry this topic had been introduced," and furthermore, he added, "He did not believe Senator Sargent was a man for the workingmen to tie to." Another member disagreed and suggested appropriating \$25 to print and distribute 1,000 copies of Sargent's speech. More discussion followed, and the resolution was referred to committee for "investigation and report." The subject surfaced again three weeks later when the committee reported back to the Assembly. It recommended against the appropriation and urged "that the subject be laid on the table." The National Workingmen's Assembly adopted the report, and thus buried the issue of Chinese immigration for the rest of the year.⁵³

And so it went. On June 30, 1878, the Amalgamated Trades and Labor Unions of Chicago staged a huge demonstration, modeled on the one two weeks earlier. Nineteen unions and labor organizations marched in a procession that stretched for almost a mile. It was a mixed gathering of both Socialist and non-Socialist workers. In fact, the Chicago Times wrote, "out of defference [sic] to

the wishes of the members of the trades-union, the red flag was not unfurled to the breeze as conspicuously as at the former demonstration." Just "one of the red rags" was visible, a reporter noted. Both Albert Parsons and fellow Socialist Paul Grottkau addressed the crowd. So did New Englanders George Gunton and George McNeill who were touring the region to spread the gospel of labor reform. Gunton talked about shorter hours. McNeill talked about a number of things, among them Chinese immigration. "The present workingmen's movement was for all," he declared, "without distinction of race, color, nationality, politics, or religion. It mattered nothing to them whether a man was born in Africa or China, in Europe or America. The world was their country, and all mankind their countrymen." McNeill, the Chicago Tribune reported, continued: "He wanted CHINAMEN IN AMERICA, if they would work for American wages." The crowd applauded. "They [the workingmen] did not want to keep the Chinamen out," McNeill said, "but they wanted to do away with the Six Companies so that men should not be able to work in America for wages contracted on foreign soil." This concluding sentence, the Chicago Times noted, received "Great cheering."⁵⁴

The events of the preceding six months had done nothing to change working-class attitudes on Chinese immigration. They may have had a greater impact in Washington, where both the red scare and the Greenback scare propelled politicians

to act. On June 17, the day after the labor uprising was supposed to occur, Congress adopted its joint resolution urging President Hayes to open treaty negotiations to enable the restriction of Chinese immigration. Two days later the House of Representatives authorized an investigation to determine the causes of the nationwide depression and pinpoint the grievances held by American workers. Neither action received much attention in the labor press or at working-class gatherings. Two weeks later, on July 1, a delegation of West Coast Congressmen met with the president to discuss Chinese immigration. Hayes promised them that the United States would promptly open negotiations with China. Secretary of State William M. Evarts seconded this motion, and acknowledged the need "to check the immigration to our shores of the uncounted millions of Chinese aliens." Evarts, the conservative San Francisco Alta California reported, said that "he was not only willing, but patriotically desirous to aid in erecting proper barriers against this threatening incursion."⁵⁵

The wheels of government had begun to turn. Unprovoked by the demands of organized labor and the working classes, the federal government had set a new national agenda. Exclusion may not yet have been inevitable, but the direction of American immigration policy was clear. Still, the subject was hardly closed. In fact, the working classes were on the eve of their greatest challenge on the issue of

Chinese immigration. With the red scare still heavy on people's minds, Denis Kearney, the walking embodiment of the anti-Chinese movement, announced he was coming east to rally workers to back Chinese exclusion.

NOTES

1. Irish World, April 7, 1877, p. 5.
2. The best treatment of the 1876 election still remains C. Vann Woodward, Reunion and Reaction: The Compromise of 1877 and the End of Reconstruction (Boston, 1951). The term "Rutherfraud" was coined by Charles A. Dana, editor of the New York Sun. See Herbert J. Clancy, The Presidential Election of 1880 (Chicago: Loyola, 1958), p. 31, 28n.
3. Senate Report No. 689, Joint Special Committee on Chinese, 44th Cong., 2nd sess.; Congressional Record, 44th Cong., 2nd sess., pp. 1961 (Feb. 27, 1877), 2004-05, Appendix, pp. 117-19 (Feb. 28, 1877); Views of the Late Oliver P. Morton on the Character, Extent, and Effect of Chinese Immigration to the United States, Senate Misc. Doc. 20 (45th Cong., 2nd session). For a summary, see Elmer Clarence Sandmeyer, The Anti-Chinese Movement in California (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1939), pp. 82-88.
4. Senate Document 689.
5. Loren W. Fessler, Chinese in America: Stereotyped Past, Changing Present (New York: Vantage, 1983), pp. 138-39.
6. New York Herald, Jan. 12, 1877, p. 10; Chicago Times, March 4, 1877, p. 2. Upset at being misquoted by a reporter, Socialist Albert R. Parsons, who had attended the meeting, sent off an angry letter to the Times. Parsons denied ever saying that Socialists wanted a division of property, and he invited the public to attend meetings. Letters to the editor from other Socialists, such as Henrich Ende, Philip Van Patten, Thomas J. Morgan, and John McAuliffe, suggest that the Chicago Times, although generally anti-union, had a wide readership among workers and radicals. None of these letters, it might be added, mentioned Chinese immigration. See A.R. Parsons (letter, 103 1/2 North Wells Street) in Chicago Times, March 11, 1877, p. 13, Henrich Ende (letter, Milwaukee, March 1, 1877) in ibid., March 5, 1877, p. 3, John McAuliffe (letter) in ibid., July 25, 1877, p. 10, Philip Van Patten (letter, 103 1/2 No. Wells Street) in ibid., Aug. 2, 1877, p. 1, and T.J. Morgan and Philip Van Patten (letter, Oct. 19, 1877) in ibid., Oct. 20, 1877, p. 2.
7. New York Herald, Feb. 1, 1877, p. 5, Feb. 2, 1877, p. 5, Feb. 5, 1877, p. 8, Feb. 6, 1877, p. 7, Feb. 13, 1877, p. 7, Feb. 23, 1877, p. 8, March 23, 1877, p. 5, May 23,

1877, p. 5; Chicago Times, April 20, 1877, p. 3, April 23, 1877, p. 1, May 25, 1877, p. 3, June 1, 1877, p. 3; St. Louis Globe-Democrat, April 24, 1877, p. 3; New York Labor Standard, Jan. 13, 1877, p. 1.

8. New York Herald, April 27, 1877, p. 4, May 15, 1877, p. 5, May 27, 1877, p. 6. For other workers' meetings, see Chicago Times, Jan. 30, 1877, p. 6; Irish World, Feb. 3, 1877, p. 7; New York Herald, Feb. 9, 1877, p. 2, March 11, 1877, p. 7, April 8, 1877, p. 15. The Bread Winners League may well have been the organization John Hay had in mind when he wrote his savage anti-labor novel a few years later. See John Hay, The Bread Winners, A Social Study (New York: Harper, 1893; originally published 1883).

9. New York Herald, March 11, 1877, p. 7, March 15, 1877, p. 4, March 16, 1877, p. 7, March 17, 1877, p. 5, May 25, 1877, p. 3; New York Labor Standard, May 5, 1878, p. 4. On the railroad strike and uprising, see Robert V. Bruce, 1877: Year of Violence (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959).

10. Bruce, 1877: Year of Violence; New York World, New York Herald, and New York Sun, quoted in Richard O. Boyer and Herbert M. Morais, Labor's Untold Story (New York: United Electrical, Radio & Machine Workers of America, 1980; originally published 1953), pp. 59, 62.

11. The significance of the active state in shifting Republican ideology is developed in David Montgomery, Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans, 1862-1872 (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois, 1967).

12. Ira B. Cross, A History of the Labor Movement in California (Berkeley: University of California, 1935), pp. 89-92; Alexander Saxton, The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California (Berkeley: University of California, 1971), p. 114.

13. Sandmeyer, The Anti-Chinese Movement in California, pp. 64-65; Neil Larry Shumsky, "San Francisco's Crowd: The Workingmen's Party of California, 1877-1879" (unpublished paper in possession of author); James Bryce, The American Commonwealth, II (New York: Macmillan, 1905; originally published 1894), pp. 431-32. On pronunciation of Kearney's name, see interview with ex-California Governor Leland Stanford in New York Herald, May 15, 1880, p. 4.

14. New York Herald, July 25, 1877, p. 3, July 26, 1877, p. 10, July 27, 1877, p. 9, July 30, 1877, p. 3, Aug. 7, 1877, p. 10, Aug. 12, 1877, p. 12; Chicago Times, July 22, 1877, p. 3, July 23, 1877, pp. 3, 5, July 24, 1877, p. 10, July 25, 1877, pp. 9, 10, John McAuliffe (letter) July

25, 1877, p. 10, July 26, 1877, pp. 3, 11, July 27, 1877, p. 9, Aug. 5, 1877, p. 4, Aug. 12, 1877, p. 2, Aug. 14, 1877, p. 2; New York Tribune, July 26, 1877, pp. 1, 8, July 27, 1877, p. 8, Aug. 18, 1877, p. 5; broadside, July 25, 1877, International Workingmen's Association Papers (microfilm, reel 2, frame 897); Irish World, Aug. 4, 1877; New York Labor Standard, Aug. 4, 1877, p. 1.

McDonnell called the Cooper Union meeting in New York "one of the largest and most enthusiastic ever held in this city." (New York Labor Standard, Aug. 4, 1877, p. 1.)

15. New York Herald, Aug. 9, 1877, p. 10, Aug. 18, 1877, p. 10; New York Labor Standard, Aug. 11, 1877, p. 2. To Parsons, the Chinese were less the villains than the victims of the real enemy: "when Jay Gould answered them [the railroad owners] that if the miners refused to stand any further reduction in their wages, they could get thousands of tramps to take their places, and if the tramps would not work at the price offered they could send to China to get workmen who could live on a rat and a bowl of rice a day. What do you think of such a man? (Cries of 'hang him; groans for Jay Gould')." Although hardly sympathetic to the Chinese, Parsons directed his anger not at them but at capitalists who imported cheap labor, be it domestic (tramps) or foreign (Chinese).

16. New York Herald, Sept. 3, 1877, p. 10, Sept. 11, 1877, p. 3, Sept. 14, 1877, p. 7, Oct. 2, 1877, p. 10; James Fitzgerald (letter, Philadelphia, Sept. 12, 1877) in New York Labor Standard, Sept. 23, 1877, p. 3; New York Tribune, Oct. 10, 1877, p. 8; Chicago Times, Aug. 22, 1877, p. 4, Nov. 9, 1877, p. 4.

17. Information on the Bread Winners League is scarce, but see New York Tribune, July 24, 1877, p. 5, Oct. 11, 1877, p. 5, Oct. 24, 1877, p. 1; New York Herald, July 27, 1877, p. 9, Oct. 9, 1877, p. 10, Oct. 24, 1877, p. 10. One of its leaders was future Greenbacker Blanton Duncan and it is likely that the entire organization was absorbed by the Greenback party soon after the election. On efforts toward unity and mixed tickets, see New York Herald, Oct. 12, 1877, p. 8, Oct. 14, 1877, p. 12, Oct. 27, 1877, p. 10. See also New York Tribune, Oct. 10, 1877, p. 8. The quote is from New York Herald, Sept. 3, 1877, p. 10.

18. For conflicting evidence, see New York Tribune, Aug. 13, 1877, p. 5, Sept. 14, 1877, p. 8; Chicago Inter-Ocean, Aug. 13, 1877, p. 5, Aug. 14, 1877, p. 2; New York Herald, Sept. 14, 1877, p. 7; Chicago Times, Sept. 14, 1877, p. 3.

The New York Tribune (Sept. 14, 1877, p. 10) noted a speech by an "actual workingman" (in contrast to a

demagogue) in Ohio. He stressed unemployment and the depression and ignored the Chinese.

19. On Pennsylvania, see New York Herald, Aug. 12, 1877, p. 12, Sept. 11, 1877, p. 3; Chicago Times, Sept. 11, 1877, p. 3; James Fitzgerald (letter, Philadelphia, Sept. 12, 1877) in New York Labor Standard, Sept. 23, 1877.

On Chicago, see Chicago Inter-Ocean, Aug. 21, 1877, p. 8; Irish World, Sept. 8, 1877, p. 1; Chicago Times, Sept. 15, 1877, p. 9, Oct. 2, 1877, p. 2, Oct. 7, 1877, p. 9, Oct. 9, 1877, p. 3, Oct. 11, 1877, p. 1, Oct. 13, 1877, p. 2, Oct. 14, 1877, p. 2, Oct. 16, 1877, p. 3, Oct. 21, 1877, p. 10, Oct. 23, 1877, p. 2. See also T.J. Morgan and Philip Van Patten (letter, October 19, 1877) in Chicago Times, Oct. 20, 1877, p. 2, denying Democratic involvement; and Bruce C. Nelson, Beyond the Martyrs: A Social History of Chicago's Anarchists, 1870-1900 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers, 1988), pp. 56-57, for a summary of the campaign. On attempts at unity, see also Fred E. Haynes, Third Party Movements Since the Civil War with Special Reference to Iowa. A Study in Social Politics (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1916), ch. 10.

20. New York Herald, Aug. 21, 1877; New York Tribune, Aug. 18, 1877, p. 5, Aug. 21, 1877, p. 1; New York Labor Standard, Oct. 7, 1877, p. 3.

21. Nelson, Beyond the Martyrs, pp. 56-57; Philip S. Foner, History of the Labor Movement in the United States, I (New York: International, 1947), p. 493; New York Herald, Dec. 27, 1877, p. 5, Dec. 31, 1877, p. 5; Socialistic Labor Party. Platform, Constitution, and Resolutions, Together With a Condensed Report of the Proceedings of the National Convention, Held at Newark, N.J., Dec. 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 1877, Together with a Condensed Report of the Congress Proceedings (Cincinnati, 1878), p. 11. The Chinese plank was not included in the official party platform but tacked on as an extra resolution. The Socialists wanted their positions known and disseminated but had little interest in highlighting the Chinese issue.

22. The strike was well-covered by the major New York newspapers. For the best accounts, see Cigar Makers' Official Journal, Oct. 1877 through Jan. 1878, and the almost daily reports in New York Herald. See also Samuel Gompers, Seventy Years of Life and Labor, An Autobiography, Nick Salvatore, ed. (Ithaca, N.Y.: I.L.R., 1984; originally published 1924), pp. 39, 45-53. The quotes are from New York Tribune, Nov. 7, 1877, p. 3; and Gompers, p. 48.

23. Cigar Makers' Official Journal, Nov. 10, 1877, pp. 1, 4; New York Herald, Oct. 19, 1877, p. 5, Oct. 21, 1877,

p. 12, Oct. 23, 1877, p. 4, Oct. 28, 1877, p. 12, Oct. 30, 1877, Nov. 18, 1877, p. 13, Jan. 6, 1878, p. 7; Gompers, Seventy Years of Life and Labor, pp. 49-50; New York Tribune, Oct. 24, 1877, p. 2.

24. New York Herald, Oct. 17, 1877, p. 2, Oct. 19, 1877, p. 5, Jan. 6, 1878, p. 7; John D. McCormick (letter, Trenton, N.J., Oct. 24, 1877) in Cigar Makers' Official Journal, Nov. 10, 1877, p. 3, ibid., p. 4; New York Tribune, Oct. 31, 1877, p. 2; New York Labor Standard, Oct. 21, 1877, p. 1, Nov. 11, 1877, p. 4.

25. New York Tribune, Oct. 19, 1877, p. 2, Nov. 10, 1877, p. 10; New York Herald, Nov. 6, 1877, p. 8, Nov. 7, 1877, p. 9, Nov. 18, 1877, p. 13; Cigar Makers' Official Journal, Nov. 10, 1877, p. 4, George Fencott (letter, Troy, N.Y., Oct. 22, 1877) in ibid., p. 2. See also New York Labor Standard, Nov. 18, 1877, p. 1; New York Tribune, Nov. 11, 1877, p. 2.

26. Cigar Makers' Official Journal, Nov. 10, 1877, p. 4, Dec. 24, 1877, p. 3; New York Herald, Nov. 13, 1877, p. 5, Jan. 6, 1878, p. 7.

27. Gompers, Seventy Years of Life and Labor, pp. 45, 51; Cigar Makers' Official Journal, Feb. 10, 1878, p. 1, May 10, 1878, p. 3, John Derr (letter, Philadelphia, Nov. 29, 1877) in ibid., Dec. 10, 1877, p. 1.

28. Cigar Makers' Official Journal, May 10, 1878, p. 3, June 10, 1878, p. 1; New York Labor Standard, Jan. 27, 1878.

29. Edwin R. Meade, The Chinese Question, A Paper Read at the Annual Meeting of the Social Science Association of America, held at Saratoga, N.Y., Sept. 7th, 1877 (New York: Arthur & Bonnell, 1877); New York Herald, Sept. 8, 1877, p. 2; Seelye quoted in San Francisco Alta California, May 8, 1876, p. 1; Lord and Sanborn quoted in New York Herald, Sept. 8, 1876, p. 2; Wells quoted in Chicago Inter-Ocean, Sept. 8, 1876, p. 5, and in speech by Meade, Congressional Record, 44th Cong., 2nd sess., Appendix, p. 118 (Feb. 28, 1877); San Francisco Chronicle, May 8, 1876. For background on the American Social Science Association, see Thomas L. Haskell, The Emergence of Professional Social Science: The American Social Science Association and the Nineteenth Century Crisis of Authority (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois, 1977).

30. White and Hodge quoted in Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., p. 1267 (Feb. 13, 1879). M.J. Dee, "Chinese Immigration," North American Review (CXXVII: CCLX,

Jan.-Feb. 1878), pp. 506-526. The quotes are from pp. 511, 522, 523, 524, 525.

31. San Francisco Chronicle, Oct. 16, 1877, p. 2, Nov. 4, 1877, Nov. 30, 1877, p. 2.; Boston Globe, July 28, 1878, p. 1.

32. New York Tribune, Nov. 30, 1877, p. 3, Dec. 7, 1877, p. 8; Chicago Times, Dec. 7, 1877, p. 4, Dec. 21, 1877, p. 2.

33. New York Tribune, Dec. 18, 1877, pp. 2, 4. On Mills, see Dictionary of American Biography, VII (New York: Scribners, 1934), pp. 6-7.

34. New York Labor Standard, Oct. 7, 1877, p. 1; Congressional Record, 45th Cong, 1st sess., p. 195 (Oct. 29, 1877); Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 2nd sess., pp. 68 (Dec. 7, 1877), 81, 98 (Dec. 10, 1877), 251, 271 (Jan. 10, 1878), 310, 318, 320 (Jan. 14, 1878), 383 (Jan. 17, 1878); Chicago Times, Jan. 19, 1878, p. 4.

35. Boston Globe, Feb. 27, 1878, p. 4; Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 2nd sess., pp. 3226 (May 7, 1878), 3772-73 (May 25, 1878), 4782 (June 17, 1878). For Sargent's speech, see ibid., pp. 1544-53 (March 7, 1878).

36. New York Herald, Nov. 23, 1877, p. 4, Feb. 24, 1878, p. 5. By 1881 there were over 300 Greenback newspapers in the United States. See list in Oshkosh (Wisc.) Standard, June 23, 1881, p. 6, June 30, 1881, p. 2.

37. Cleveland Labor Advance, March 2, 1878, pp. 1, 2; St. Paul (Minn.) Anti-Monopolist, Feb. 28, 1878, p. 1; Oshkosh (Wisc.) Greenback Standard, March 22, 1878, p. 2.

38. Cleveland Labor Advance, March 16, 1878, p. 2. The Irish World printed its own platform which was twice as long. It said nothing on Chinese immigration. In one plank decrying "the competition of ... pauper-paid foreign labor," the editor added an asterisk to explain that this referred to the need for a strong protective tariff--not the Chinese. See Irish World, Feb. 23, 1878, p. 4, March 9, 1878, p. 5.

39. Boston Globe, May 23, 1878, p. 1, June 6, 1878, p. 1; Chicago Times, July 24, 1878, p. 3; New York Herald, March 28, 1878, p. 7, May 10, 1878, p. 5, June 19, 1878, p. 3, June 30, 1878, p. 6; Irish World, May 18, 1878, p. 5, June 15, 1878, p. 5, Aug. 3, 1878, p. 5; St. Paul (Minn.) Anti-Monopolist, May 23, 1878, p. 5; Edward McPherson, A Hand-Book of Politics for 1878: Being a Record of Important Political Action National and State, from July 15, 1876, to

July 1, 1878 (New York: Negro University, 1969; originally published 1878), pp. 161-62, 167-68; Gompers, Seventy Years of Life and Labor, p. 45; Oshkosh (Wisc.) Greenback Standard, May 24, 1878, p. 1; Cary quoted in ibid., June 21, 1878, p. 2; Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections, 2nd ed. (Washington, 1985), pp. 794-97; Haynes, Third Party Movements Since the Civil War, p. 114. In Oshkosh, Wisconsin, for example, Greenbackers elected a mayor and six alderman. (Ibid., April 5, 1878, p. 3.)

40. Chicago Times, Oct. 26, 1877, p. 1; New York Labor Standard, Dec. 16, 1877, p. 2, Feb. 10, 1878, p. 2. See also ibid., May 5, 1878, p. 4.

41. New York Labor Standard, Feb. 10, 1878, p. 3, Feb. 17, 1878, p. 3, March 3, 1878, p. 3, March 17, 1878, p. 1, Charles W. Pope (letters, San Francisco, January 27, 1878 [misprinted "1875"], and San Francisco, n.d.) in ibid., Feb. 17, 1878, p. 1, Feb. 24, 1878, p. 1, William Jaeger (letter, San Francisco, March 1, 1878) in ibid., March 17, 1878, p. 2.

The verb was also spelled "Chinaized." See ibid., Aug. 11, 1877, p. 1, Feb. 17, 1878, p. 1, June 2, 1878, p. 4.

42. "A Factory Slave" (letter, Fall River, Mass., Dec. 4, 1877) in New York Labor Standard, Dec. 9, 1877, p. 4.

43. New York Labor Standard, June 23, 1878, p. 1, but see also George Gunton to Hugh Mason (letter, Fall River, Mass., to Ashton-under-Lyme, Dec. 16, 1877) in ibid., Dec. 23, 1877, p. 3.

44. New York Labor Standard, Aug. 11, 1877, p. 1, July 7, 1878, p. 8, Aug. 11, 1878, p. 4. See also ibid., Sept. 2, 1877, p. 2.

45. New York Labor Standard, June 30, 1878, p. 4.

46. New York Labor Standard, May 12, 1878, p. 2, June 9, 1878, p. 3, July 14, 1878, p. 3.

47. Detroit Socialist, Feb. 9, 1878, p. 3, March 23, 1878, p. 8, March 30, 1878, p. 4, April 20, 1878, p. 6, Helverson (letter, Philadelphia) in ibid., March 16, 1878, p. 6, B.E.G. Jewett (letter, Evansville, Ind.) in ibid., May 4, 1878, p. 6; J.B. Rumford (letter, Brookesfield, May 5, 1878) in Cincinnati National Socialist, June 29, 1878, p. 6; St. Louis Communist, June 1, 1878, p. 1. A brief article in the Communist mentioned Confucius and the Golden Rule. See Communist, Jan. 1876, p. 26.

48. Chicago Tribune, Chicago Inter-Ocean, Albert R. Parsons, and other Socialists quoted in Nelson, Beyond the Martyrs, pp. 58-59; Chicago Times, April 30, 1878, p. 3, May 6, 1878, p. 1, May 7, 1878, p. 3, May 11, 1878, p. 8, June 14, 1878, p. 2, June 15, 1878, p. 3; Cincinnati Enquirer quoted in ibid., May 3, 1878, p. 3; New York Tribune quoted in ibid., May 13, 1878, p. 4; New York Herald, May 4, 1878, p. 10, May 7, 1878, pp. 3, 7, May 18, 1878, p. 4, May 28, 1878, p. 6, June 10, 1878, p. 3, June 13, 1878, p. 7, June 14, 1878, p. 6, June 15, 1878, pp. 7, 10; Boston Globe, May 18, 1878, p. 1, May 26, 1878, p. 1; New York World, quoted in ibid., April 8, 1878, p. 4.

49. Nelson, Beyond the Martyrs, pp. 58-59; Chicago Times, June 5, 1878, p. 3, June 14, 1878, p. 2, June 17, 1878, p. 1, June 18, 1878, p. 3, July 9, 1878, p. 4; Boston Globe, May 26, 1878, p. 1; New York Herald, May 23, 1878, p. 7, June 20, 1878, p. 6, June 21, 1878, p. 6; Sandmeyer, The Anti-Chinese Movement in California, p. 66.

50. See, for example, New York Herald, Jan. 17, 1878, p. 4, Jan. 20, 1878, pp. 7, 9, March 18, 1878, p. 9, March 27, 1878, p. 7, March 30, 1878, p. 6, May 2, 1878, p. 12, May 4, 1878, p. 8, May 10, 1878, p. 5, May 11, 1878, p. 6, May 20, 1878, p. 7, May 21, 1878, p. 4, May 26, 1878, p. 14, May 27, 1878, p. 7, June 11, 1878, p. 5, June 25, 1878, p. 5; Chicago Times, Jan. 27, 1878, p. 3, April 18, 1878, p. 8, April 30, 1878, pp. 3, 9; May 6, 1878, p. 1, May 12, 1878, p. 4, June 3, 1878, p. 3, June 4, 1878, p. 5, June 8, 1878, p. 9, June 14, 1878, p. 2, June 15, 1878, p. 3; Boston Globe, Feb. 4, 1878, p. 8, May 29, 1878, p. 4, June 11, 1878, p. 1; Washington Star, June 15, 1878, p. 4; Irish World, June 8, 1878, p. 7; Iron Molders' Journal, March 9, 1878, p. 76.

51. Fall River (Mass.) Daily Journal, Feb. 5, 1878, quoted in New York Labor Standard, Feb. 17, 1878, p. 1; Boston Globe, March 26, 1878, p. 1; "E.E.*" (letter, Philadelphia, June 12, 1878) in Cincinnati National Socialist, June 29, 1878, p. 3.

52. Synopsized proceedings of the National Workingmen's Assembly can be found weekly in the Washington Star, beginning October 9, 1877, p. 4. For formative meetings, see also Oct. 16, 1877, p. 4, Oct. 24, 1877, p. 4. On specific legislative demands, see ibid., Nov. 14, 1877, p. 4, Feb. 5, 1878, p. 4, Feb. 13, 1878, p. 4, March 27, 1878, p. 4, April 17, 1878, p. 4. On other business, see ibid., Jan. 16, 1878, p. 4, Jan. 23, 1878, p. 4, April 3, 1878, p. 4.

At a mass meeting called by the Assembly for October 29, 1877, Representative Samuel S. Cox [D-NY] made a brief

speech urging a "Chinese wall" be built "somewhere near the Pacific coast ... to prevent them [the Chinese] from swarming over the country." The workingmen made no reference to Cox's speech at their regular meetings. At two other mass meetings and processions featuring thousands of workers in December 1877 and June 1878--President Hayes addressed the former--the issue of Chinese immigration never came up. See ibid., Nov. 10, 1877, p. 5, Dec. 13, 1877, p. 4, June 6, 1878, p. 4.

53. Ralston resigned two weeks later. See ibid., March 20, 1878, p. 1, April 10, 1878, p. 4, April 24, 1878, p. 1.

54. Chicago Times, July 1, 1878, p. 5; Chicago Tribune quoted in New York Labor Standard, July 14, 1878, p. 1.

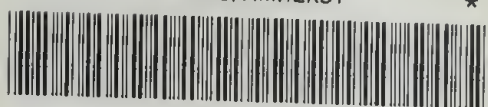
55. San Francisco Alta California, July 2, 1878, p. 1.



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ROLLING IN THE DIRT:
THE ORIGINS OF THE CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT
AND THE POLITICS OF RACISM, 1870-1882

A Dissertation Presented

by

ANDREW GYORY

v. 2

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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Department of History

CHAPTER 7

"AN UNDULY INFLATED SACK OF VERY BAD GAS":

DENIS KEARNEY COMES EAST, 1878

"The man who would prepare to dump into the sea the people of any nationality, to improve the existing state of things, has too poor a head, and too weak a heart to be a leader of the masses."

--"By a Mechanic" in the New York Witness, Aug. 15, 1878

Denis Kearney arrived in Boston on July 28, 1878. A self-proclaimed workingmen's leader and the foremost anti-Chinese agitator on the Pacific Coast, Kearney came east from San Francisco with four announced goals: to see his ailing mother, to rally workers to form a workingmen's party, to campaign for Benjamin F. Butler, and to publicize the "dangers" of Chinese immigration. No visit by a West Coast citizen had ever received more publicity or aroused more excitement. The Eastern press heralded his arrival as a momentous occasion; indeed, the young Irish immigrant became the media event of the summer of 1878. Reporters followed his every move and transcribed or summarized every word he uttered. He gave speeches in northeastern Massachusetts for two weeks, and then embarked on a tour of the Midwest. Crowds flocked to hear him in Indianapolis, Chicago, St. Louis, Bloomington, Cincinnati, Columbus, and Newport, Kentucky. He journeyed to Washington where he

gained an audience with President Hayes on August 29. He also met with Carl Schurz, Secretary of the Interior, and George W. McCrary, Secretary of War. He spoke to large and enthusiastic crowds in Philadelphia, Newark, Jersey City, Brooklyn, and Baltimore, and received his largest audience at Union Square in New York City. Returning to Massachusetts in mid-September, he planned to start a newspaper, organize a workingmen's convention in Boston, and speak throughout the state for the next six weeks. By the time he left for California in November Kearney had addressed over 100,000 people. His audience through the newspapers reached well into the millions. Whether he was loved or hated, media attention had turned Kearney into a household name.

But something peculiar began to happen mid-way through his tour. Crowds, which had often numbered in the high thousands during the summer, diminished markedly during the fall. He was hooted off the stage in late September and pelted repeatedly with rotten eggs and tomatoes in October. The Workingmen's Party of Boston turned openly hostile toward him after the 1878 election, and Kearney, "a laughing stock," left for California a week later.

Kearney's four-month swing across the East and Midwest provides a unique window through which to view the American political climate, the press, organized labor, and popular attitudes toward the Chinese. No event since Calvin

Sampson's importation of workers to North Adams eight years earlier had so captured the nation's attention in regard to the Chinese. Kearney's visit catapulted the issue of Chinese immigration back into the national spotlight, where it would remain until it was settled four years later. At first glance, the impact and significance of Kearney's visit appear obvious and clear-cut. Workers and labor leaders flocked to hear him and warmly applauded his anti-Chinese rhetoric. Socialists advertised his coming and appeared with him on stage. Meanwhile, the middle and professional classes shunned him, and mainstream editorials denounced him everywhere he went. Kearney's visit thus appears to have demarcated the basic class differences of the Gilded Age. Upon closer examination, however, a more ambiguous picture emerges. Working-class response to Kearney fits into no neat box. Workers' attitudes toward him ran from general acceptance to complete disavowal. Attitudes toward the Chinese and immigration restriction were equally diverse. Middle-class opinion demonstrated similar variations. While few members of the middle and upper classes openly praised Kearney, many anonymously applauded his anti-Chinese message. An analysis of Kearney's Eastern tour reveals the difficulty of accurately gauging public opinion; it also reveals the obstacles historians face in understanding the thoughts and positions held by different classes of people. Such analysis further reveals the critical distinction

between public opinion and people's perception of public opinion. The key legacy of Kearney's visit was not that he galvanized the working classes against the Chinese but that he succeeded in making some politicians and segments of the press think that he had. Perhaps more important, Kearney helped turn Chinese exclusion into a cross-class movement. Politicians then seized the issue and further manipulated public opinion--and perceptions thereof. Politicians and newspapers could dismiss Kearney as a demagogue, a rabble-rouser, and a "brutal, ignorant, blaspheming ruffian."¹ But condemn him as they did, politicians would soon outdo him. Within days of Kearney's return to the Sand Lots of San Francisco in late November 1878, Congress would begin drafting its first law to restrict Chinese immigration.

Denis Kearney was born in County Cork, Ireland, in 1847. The second of seven sons, he left home in 1858 following his father's early death. At age eleven he went to sea. A sailor, first mate, and later captain, Kearney "circumnavigated the globe and visited many parts of the earth's surface" while still a teenager. He married in 1870 and settled in San Francisco in 1872. He purchased a draying, or trucking, business, and became an American citizen four years later. Kearney had little formal schooling but considered himself "a great reader," particularly of Darwin and Spencer. He neither drank nor

smoked and was, according to economist Henry George, temperate in everything but speech. He attended a club known as the Lyceum of Self-Culture and by participating in weekly debates learned to speak in public. In his early days he defended Chinese immigration and attacked both organized religion and working-class lethargy. Even later, when he became "the workingmen's advocate," he would remain critical of unions and frequently denounce strikes.²

Kearney cut his political teeth in 1877 when, as a member of the Draymen and Teamster's Union, he challenged the city-backed carting monopoly. He burst into prominence a few months later in the wake of the national railroad strike. Squeezed by industrial depression and agricultural drought, San Francisco had become a cauldron of political unrest. On the Sand Lots, local citizens addressed--some said "harangued"--their fellow workers on problems plaguing the city. Kearney, "a ready and forcible speaker," emerged as the leader both of the Sand Lots and the Workingmen's Party of California. His chief rallying cry was "The Chinese Must Go." Meetings began and ended with this benediction, and addresses and resolutions focused on the alleged evils of Chinese immigration. "Every speech and every document written by me," Kearney later wrote the English historian Lord Bryce, "ended with the words, 'And whatever happens the Chinese must go.'" In spite of his frequent arrests, friends and enemies considered him the

head and tail of the anti-Chinese groundswell, "the master spirit of the movement." The Workingmen's Party of California would dominate San Francisco politics from 1877 to 1880. In the spring of 1878, the party elected a mayor, numerous local officials, and many delegates to the state's constitutional convention. Flushed with success, Kearney foresaw uniting workingmen across the country into one grand political party that would include workers, Greenbackers, and socialists. The party's chief aims, he declared, would be to elect workingmen to office and rid the country of both "capitalist bondholders" and Chinese immigrants. With these goals in mind, Denis Kearney, just thirty-one years old, embarked for the East on July 21, 1878.³

"It is evident from several indications," the Boston Journal noted as Kearney was crossing the continent, "that the workingmen of this State are by no means united in welcoming Kearney on his forthcoming visit. Many of them have no sympathy with his anti-Chinese policy, they dislike his open Communistic principles and will not endure his conceited intolerance." Despite such disclaimers, the press turned Kearney into a star attraction. Every newspaper touted his arrival, and in a summer far more quiescent than the one preceding, the media used his presence to enliven their columns. Kearney, the Journal predicted, "is likely to be the sensation of the hour when he comes, and crowds

will gather at his public appearances." The Journal was right. Listeners packed Faneuil Hall on August 5 to hear his first speech and thousands had to be turned away. "Not one-fourth of the crowd," the New York Times noted, "could gain entrance." His Celtic origins no doubt helped swell attendance in heavily-Irish Boston and vicinity as audiences of two to six thousand turned out to hear him in Marblehead, Lynn, Lowell, and Brighton.⁴

Kearney's style and appearance varied little from speech to speech or place to place. "He dresses," a correspondent to the New York Tribune reported, "just like his class," in a dark, rough-looking jacket, a blue or checked muslin shirt, and a short silk cravat tied in a sailor's knot. One of his trademarks was, after speaking and getting hot, to dramatically throw off his coat and unbutton his collar, gestures that always provoked a storm of applause. Then he would stand, "with his thumbs in the arm-holes of his vest," waiting for the ovation to subside. As he spoke he would march frenetically up and down the platform, "as though pacing the deck of a vessel." He was of medium height, with broad shoulders and a large chest. He had a bristly "negative-colored" moustache and ruddy complexion, "his hair standing over a forehead not noticeable for breadth." Although "very ordinary looking," the Chicago Times noted, his "small, dark eyes" had "a good-natured twinkle." Tony Hart, of the musical combination

Harrigan and Hart, who happened to meet the Californian on his cross-country trip, described him as "round-headed," with a "half-inch forehead, terrier mouth, and a brogue that you could cut...." The Tribune correspondent called him "just an average bullet-headed Irishman," but defended his elocution: "[he] uses perfectly good grammar, and except in his abusive phrases, employs well-chosen words, and has a straightforward English pronunciation, with a few lingering traces of his early education in such words as 'pul-pit' 'col-yume (column) and here and there an insignificant slip or two." Brogue or not, Kearney spoke clearly, carefully, and deliberately. He was, wrote one observer, "a natural orator." When he wanted to stress a point, he would stop abruptly, raise his right hand, and "hurl it toward the audience, as though he were throwing a stone." The emphasized words, another reporter noted, were "forcibly ... ejected like hot shot from a battery." By using language like "a missile," the "Illustrious Drayman" entranced his audiences and stirred them to applause. "Mr. Kearney has power," the Boston Globe concluded, "and his power is of that kind which to be appreciated must be seen and heard. It cannot be properly described."⁵ [See figure 7.1]

Kearney's words, even a hundred years later, still speak for themselves. He used strong language to provoke response, and his words varied little. Like his motions and gestures, the content of his speeches was remarkably



THE PROGRESS OF ONE OF KEARNEY'S SPEECHES.—HOW HE COOLS HIS TISSUES.

Figure 7.1. Cartoonists had a field day lampooning Kearney. Here, his habit of taking off his jacket is carried to the extreme. Note also his hat, which Kearney always passed around at the conclusion of his speeches.

Source: Puck, September 11, 1878.

consistent. His addresses, which generally lasted one to two hours, covered four general topics: contempt for the press, contempt for capitalists, contempt for politicians, and contempt for the Chinese. In between, he sprinkled praise on Ben Butler and assorted others. His jeremiads were filled with oaths, damnations, and incendiary comments. "Fellow workingmen and women of Boston," he began his first speech, "On behalf of the workingmen of the Pacific coast I thank you for this enthusiastic reception." After some introductory remarks he launched into attack:

First and foremost I will pay my respects to the newspapers. (Clapping. Mr. Kearney here called for order, there being much excitement, and then proceeded.) ... The newspapers, from the earliest history of printing, have been run in the interest--take it down reporters--of cut-throats, political bilks (applause), daylight thieves and midnight assassins. A newspaper is an enterprise like all other business enterprises. For the reporters of the press I have great respect. (Applause and laughter.) The reporters of the newspapers are workingmen, like ourselves--working for bread and butter. (A voice, 'That's so.')

But for the villainous, serpent-like, slimy imps of hell that run these newspapers, I have the utmost contempt.... These men start a newspaper, and they want to make money. The first thief that comes along with his purse of gold stolen from the masses, offers it to the newspaper proprietor, and buys the columns of the paper.... I have known some of the dirtiest, drunkenest bummers that God Almighty ever put breath into write articles for newspapers condemning this honest uprising of the people.⁶

Kearney denounced any newspaper that criticized him. At Marblehead and Lynn, mention of the Boston Herald drew hisses from the crowd. "I now propose three groans for that slimy sheet," he called, and a trio of groans were given. In New York he ripped up a newspaper on stage to the delight

of the crowd. The New York Tribune he called "the organ of the plunderers." Its editor, he added, "is not fit to tie the shoestrings of Denis Kearney." In Cincinnati he simply bemoaned "the lying, venial, venereal press of the United States." And as always, he lambasted "an old prostitute known as the Associated Press"--that "villainous, thieving, infamous band of scalawags that are aiming to control public opinion."⁷

Denunciations of the press, "the subsidized, contemptible, slimy tool of the money power," often provided a lead-in to the more despicable elements of society--monopolists and capitalists. This loosely defined group included "bank smashers, railroad thieves, and political bummers." Workingmen, he exclaimed, must "tear the masks from off these tyrants, these lecherous bondholders, these political thieves (laughter and applause) and railroad robbers, when they do that they will find that they are swine, hogs (laughter) possessed of devils (renewed laughter), and then we will drive them into the sea. (Prolonged laughter and applause.)" In Newark he denounced the "capitalistic vagabonds" as "blood-sucking vampires." In Worcester they were "honorable bilks" and "blue-bellied, thieving, hell-bound villains." In Cincinnati they were "cowardly whelps"; in Boston, "blatant blatherskites," "shoddy aristocrats," and "infamous, insatiate, damnable pirates." They were both "leprous" and "lecherous." When

newspapers accused Kearney of mispronouncing the latter term, he laughed and heaped more abuse on the "leecherous bondholder[s]"--"spell it with two ee's, if you please," he requested--"... and their lickspittles."⁸

This last category--"lickspittles"--included the bar, the university, and the pulpit. "Legal pirates," he told a crowd in Marblehead, "--you will excuse me for being plain and being down on lawyers--I am down on them from principle; I look upon them as a set of garroters of humanity." In one speech he purposely used the terms "lawyer" and "liar" interchangeably. Professors he dismissed as "college consumptives" who lectured to "bandbox gentlemen":

What have these men done with all their knowledge?
They have robbed the people. They will grab
everything, from a ten-penny nail to 100 acres of land.
(Laughter.) They have grabbed heaven, they would grab
hell if they thought they could get up a corner on
sulphur. (Applause.)

Through the person of Henry Ward Beecher, Kearney attacked the upper-class clergy and congregation. "They use money that they steal from the people," he told his Cincinnati listeners, "to hire this bread and water Beecher to preach to them from velvet cushions. Who are the men that he preaches to? A dirty lot of prosperous, fat, lazy gamblers, [and] thieving rascals. (Laughter.) ... There would be no desolate households if Beecher had dined on bread and water.... Oh, you hoary headed vampire, we are going to give you all the hell you want right here...."⁹

Kearney wasted little time on niceties. "The Democratic thieves and Republican robbers (derisive laughter) must be dropped." Nor did he care much for conciliation. "They tell us that capital and labor must not quarrel; that they are like Siamese twins. I deny it. I say hammer hell plumb out of capital. (Applause.)" Kearney did not normally preach violence. He relied instead on the ballot box as a remedy for workingmen's problems. But force could be necessary to keep elections clean and politicians honest. He urged listeners in Boston to "take the life of any man ... who attempts to debar the voters from exercising their right of suffrage." Public officials who broke their promises deserved swift reprisals. "Shoot the first man that goes back on you after you have elected him intelligently," he told his New York audience, "see that you hunt him down and shoot him. (Cheers.) Moreover, see that you roast him afterward. (Cheers.) And if he goes to Europe--goes to Paris--or if he goes to the Springs, see that you watch him, and follow him, and shoot him there. (Cheers and laughter.) Then," Kearney predicted, "you can get honest men...." And if shooting didn't work, he offered an alternative: "hang them to the highest lamp post. (Applause and laughter.)" Oppression and suffering justified murder and plunder. "Before I starve in a country like this," he said, "I will cut a man's throat and take whatever he has got." Kearney advised workers to organize--

not into labor unions, but into one great political party. The solution he preached everywhere was for "Honest workingmen"--"eight-tenths of the American people"--to unite behind his organization. "I say we must oppose everything," he said in Cincinnati. "The Workingmen's party must win, if it has to wade knee deep in blood and perish in battle. (Applause, laughter, and hisses.) The workingmen of this country must win though hell boil over. (Laughter, applause, and hisses.)"¹⁰

Kearney's tirades were not without their wit, their poetry, and their pathos. "A man had the cheek to tell me the other day," he began, "that he was with the Workingmen so long as they remained inside of the law." Pure "nonsense," Kearney remarked, "The law is like the handle of a jug, all on one side." Kearney quoted the Bible, Sir Walter Scott, and various poets. He invoked images from Shakespeare and used nature for metaphors. He spoke of walking the earth at midday with

the vast expanse of the blue heavens unrelieved with the sparkle of a single star, and yet I know that Mars still holds its course, that Venus still whirls through space, that Jupiter and Uranus are flashing in the fields of light, that the blazing belt of Orion and the bright and guiding gleam of the North-Star are all there; and when the centripetal force of nature wheels us into the presence of night, we behold our companion worlds travelling in shining splendor on their eternal rounds. And thus it is with a movement of this kind. We know that the workingmen are there. We know they are as true as the stars in their views, and will, when called upon, exhibit themselves in beauty. (Prolonged applause.)

Some allusions were briefer and more direct. "The air is filled with the mutterings of the thunder that precedes the coming storm," he cried in Boston. "Even the leaves of the forest are whispering to each other about the desolation which is about to take place."¹¹

No matter what flights of fancy his imagination took, Kearney returned to the working man and woman, the poor, the powerless:

Go into any of your factories of boasted and enlightened New England and behold a picture of abject slavery more horrible than ever existed in the South or was ever painted by the fervid imagination of the authoress of "Uncle Tom's Cabin." Do your factory hands have the liberty to dress as they please, or to eat what they please, or to go where they please? No. Their wages are so fixed that they can earn just enough to enable them to live and dress just so, no more. Do you who work in the factories have anything to say as to what wages you shall receive? No. Neither did the negro. Is it a free country where a man shall not have a voice in regard to what wages he shall receive? Now is the time for all such slaves to wake up and think of their condition and strike a blow that will forever make them free.

These factories he called "the disgrace of our boasted civilization. Oh! shame on the company that would allow women to work in a seething, boiling room ten hours a day." He evoked laughter by suggesting Beecher try toiling in a factory for fourteen hours one day. He no doubt evoked sympathy when he stated, "I have heard men in Boston talking about the [city's] points of interest, great buildings, [and] fine scenery; but, friends, there is no point of interest in a city where hundreds of its best citizens are starving." Kearney reveled in juxtaposing scenes of poverty

and want with those of wealth and idleness. He drew these images in black and white. No subtleties ever shaded his depiction of good and evil, right and wrong, or poor and rich. Scenes of destitution inevitably led to images of the idle wealthy. "All the statistics you want for this campaign," he said, "is to point to the haggard faces of our starved mothers and dear boys and girls, and contrast them with the lazy bummers of Long Branch."¹²

Kearney's main piece of advice to his audiences, indeed the phrase that became associated with him, was "Pool your issues." By this he meant that all workers--greenbackers, socialists, and laborers of every persuasion--should drop their differences and unite in one "solid phalanx" at the ballot box. "You must forget that you are Irishmen, Englishmen or Scotchmen" or Dutch, he told crowd after crowd, "that you are Catholic or Protestant, Spiritualists or Atheists." You must "put all your issues into one pot," he cried, "... screw a cover on it, and tie it so tightly that nobody could lift it" until you "elect workingmen to office." Precisely what issues Kearney wanted workers to pool he never quite spelled out. At a conference with labor leaders in Cincinnati, he was asked what he meant by the slogan. "'Knock the first man down who disagrees with you,'" he told them, "'capture the State.'" 'But,'" asked one of the labor leaders, "'suppose you are asked some plan or reason for pooling issues?'" 'D--n such conundrums,'"

Kearney retorted, "'the people are starving; aint that enough?'" For many it was not. "In God's name," one newspaper pleaded, give us some ideas, "propose something.... " But Kearney refused, and offered neither programs nor solutions. When asked for his reasons, one critic noted, "he denounces the questioner...." He further warned listeners to beware of "utopian theorists" who "discuss questions" or issues. "'The people are disgusted with issues,'" he told his listeners. "'I do not intend to introduce a long rigmarole of figures and statistics. We have had enough of that. What have they done for us?'" A voice in the crowd shot back, "Nothing!"¹³

Despite his vagueness on issues, every Kearney speech was clear on one point: supporting Ben Butler for governor of Massachusetts. The iconoclastic Congressman from Lowell had had a long turbulent career in American politics. A state legislator before the Civil War, he had supported shorter hour laws and gained a reputation as a pro-labor politician. As a Democrat he supported first Jefferson Davis and then Breckinridge for president in 1860. He nonetheless became a firm unionist when the war broke out. As a general he became famous for labeling runaway slaves fleeing to his lines as "contraband of war"--and then refusing to return them to their owners. After the war he switched parties and was elected to the House of Representative in 1866. He became a fervent advocate of

civil rights and radical reconstruction, and he spearheaded the drive for Johnson's impeachment in 1868. Butler continued to court working-class votes, a matter that seldom sat well with the patrician wing of the Republican Party, which had never trusted him to begin with. They accused him repeatedly of corruption, demagoguery, and opportunism. Relations grew stormier during the next decade, and by 1878 Butler was ready to bolt. He renounced the Republican Party and let it be known he would run for governor if nominated by the Greenback-Labor Party. Butler was one of the few members of the House with nationwide recognition. A walking source of controversy, he made headlines wherever he went. With his hefty paunch, drooping moustache, and sagging eyelids, he was also a favorite with cartoonists.¹⁴ [See figure 7.2]

Kearney invoked his name to resounding cheers in city after city. The "chivalrous Butler," he proclaimed, "the gallant, the gifted, the glorious. We hope that he will receive the reward from the workingmen of Massachusetts he so justly merits for his bold and unspoken action on behalf of down-trodden humanity." Many charged that if elected Butler would use the governorship as a springboard to the presidency, and that he had brought Kearney east to campaign for him. [See figure 7.3] This latter charge was false but would hound Butler throughout the campaign. The two met once during the summer and had a short conference at

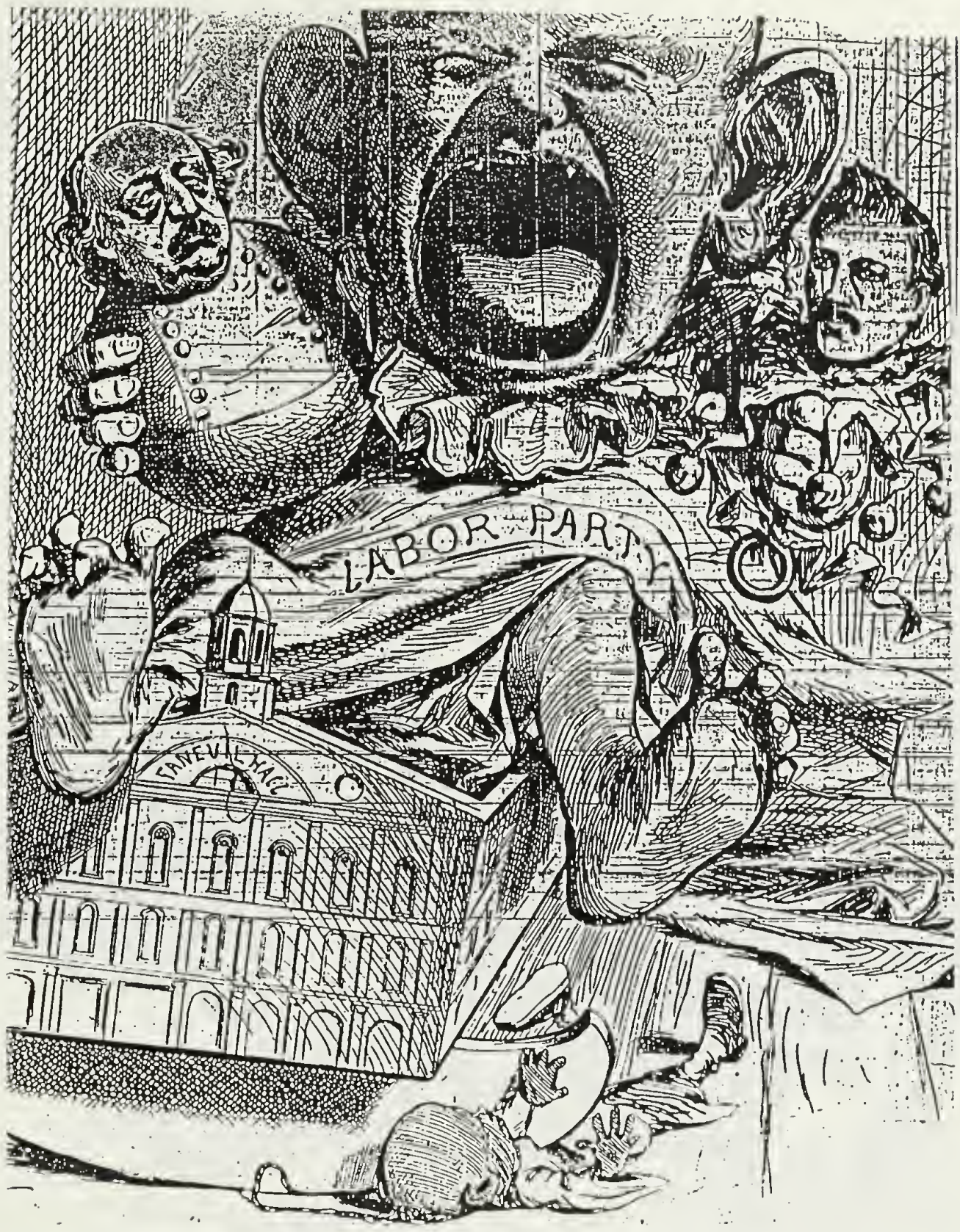


Figure 7.2. Cartoonists often portrayed the Greenback-Labor Party as an infant, an allusion to the term "rag baby," a formerly derogatory name that Greenbackers eventually accepted as their own. In this cartoon the "rag baby," holding Butler in one arm and Kearney in the other, rocks the Faneuil Hall cradle. Note the Chinese character pinned underneath.

Source: New York Graphic, August 7, 1878.



UP HILL WORK FOR THE CALIFORNIA DRAYMAN

Figure 7.3. Steering the twin horses "Labor Reform" and "Greenbacks," drayman Denis Kearney carries Butler and the "rag baby" toward the Massachusetts governorship--en route to the White House.

Source: New York Graphic, August 20, 1878.

Kearney's mother's house in Brighton. Thereafter Butler kept his distance. "'Kearney is not endorsed by me,'" he said in an interview in mid-August, then adding somewhat nebulously, "'and he knows his business as I do mine.'" Regardless, Kearney's enthusiasm for Butler remained strong. His name was usually a crowd-pleaser throughout his tour.¹⁵

And then came the Chinese. As Kearney had told a reporter on his cross-country train ride, "my chief mission here is to secure the expulsion of Chinese labor from California...." Kearney normally saved this subject for the conclusion of his speech. "[W]hen I landed in the city of Boston," he said, "... I smelled a Chinaman. (Laughter and applause.) I remarked this to my friend who was with me, and strange enough, we had not proceeded more than fifty yards when we ran across one of these Mongolian lepers (laughter)." In speech after speech Kearney described their "putrid carcasses," crowded living arrangements, and diets of "rice and rats." He amused one audience by impersonating a Chinese laundryman who

fill their mouths full of water, and then schoo-o-o-o (imitating the ejection of water in the form of spray from the mouth) all over the linen. (Laughter.) They never wash their mouths, and, of course, whatever disease is incorporated in the system is thus transmitted to the clothes and ironed into them. (Renewed laughter.) When our fine ladies and fancy gentlemen put this linen close to their skins ... they begin to sweat. (Laughter.) Then they itch. (Renewed laughter.) Then they scratch. (Continued laughter.) Should they, somehow, bring the blood to the surface of the skin they will become inoculated with the poison of

the moon-eyed leper.... In the name of common sense, friends, take timely warning and shun the Chinese laundrymen of Boston!

In New York he told his listeners that the Pacific Coast was "cursed with parasites from China" who were "used as a weapon by the grinding, grasping capitalists ... to oppress the poor laboring men.... But let me tell you here to-night," he added, "that the laboring men of California ... have captured the State, and they are going to take care of the Asiatic leper. (Cheers.)" On Boston Common he shouted:

These leprous Chinamen are about the meanest creatures that God Almighty ever put breath into. (Applause.) The question is: 'Are the Chinamen to occupy this country (cries of 'No!') or the white man?' (Shouts 'We alone,') and will you assist us in ridding this country of the moonlight lepers? (Applause and exclamation of approval). All in favor of the Chinamen hold up their hands. (Hisses and no hands). All in favor of the white man, up hands. (Applause and all hands up).

Despite the seeming popularity of heaping abuse on the Chinese he did not always mention them. In Brighton he raised the subject for only a moment. He did the same in Lynn. He spoke little about the Chinese when in Bloomington, St. Louis, or Baltimore. Sometimes the crowds reminded him of his omission. "'Give us something about the Chinese,' called a shrill voice near the platform," when he spoke in Newark. In Newport, Kentucky the close of his speech "was devoted to the Chinese by request of the audience."¹⁶

Whether or not Kearney regaled his listeners with anti-Chinese rhetoric, he or Carl Browne, his private secretary

who accompanied him throughout the tour, concluded his rallies with a set of resolutions--some of which related to the Chinese--for the crowd to endorse. In Ohio, for example, after speaking for one hour, Kearney proclaimed: "That the workingmen of Cincinnati, in mass meeting assembled, to the number of 6,000, after a full intellectual and moral consideration, unequivocally indorse the motto of the California workingmen, 'The Chinese must go,' and will defend our country with our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor." Cheers or raised hands signified approval. In Lowell, Marblehead, and Boston the resolutions received "Great Applause." In New York Kearney read his resolution and demanded: "All in favor signify it by saying Aye. (Large numbers responded by upraised hands.) All opposed--(no response)." Thus, Kearney concluded, "It is carried unanimously." In Jersey City, the New York Sun, reported, "Mr. Kearney read a resolution that the meeting heartily approved the California cry of, 'The Chinese must go!' It was carried with only a few dissenting voices." Kearney offered his resolutions in each place he spoke and always declared them unanimously adopted. The workingmen of the East, he claimed, were fully behind him. Chinese exclusion, it appeared, was endorsed by workers everywhere he went.¹⁷

The press had a field day excoriating Kearney. "He is simply a blatant booby," the Boston Transcript stated, "with

a profane and bullying rigmarole of epithets...." His "only talent," the Philadelphia Inquirer charged, "is the Billingsgate fishwife's talent for vituperation, and whose head is as empty of ideas as his mouth is full of oaths and ribaldry." His "brazen impudence," the Inquirer added, "... is the usual accompaniment of denser ignorance." To the New York Tribune he was "a brainless blackguard," to the New York Times an "eminent blatherskite." The Chicago Times dismissed him as a "flatulent little brat." Although the New York Tribune lavished column after column on his arrival and tour, it called him a "particularly stupid and uninteresting creature" who appealed only "to those who like profanity, indecency, and coarse, vulgar and savage brutishness." The Tribune even criticized him for speaking on the Sabbath--something Republicans and Democrats would not do. Practically every detractor called him a communist. The Nation went further, comparing him to a "naked Bushman" and labeling him "the lowest type of demagogue that has yet appeared in history." Indeed, along with "ignoramus" and communist, demagogue was the term most freely employed. The St. Louis Post simply called him "The Notorious Humbug," the Hartford Courant "a fizzle and a failure" who "inspires disgust." To Harper's Weekly he was "harmless slime," to the Pottsville Miner's Journal, "a dangerous firebrand." The New York Times likened him to a "chimpanzee," while the New York World compared his speaking to "the inarticulate

howl of an enraged animal." The New York Sun dismissed his diatribes as "mere balderdash." Even the Irish press attacked Kearney. The Boston Pilot, the leading Irish Catholic paper in the nation, disavowed him as dangerous, empty-headed, and lacking ideas. The New York Irish-American also came down on the "foul-mouthed demagogue" and his "tirades of the wildest and most indecent abuse."¹⁸

Kearney became the press's number one whipping boy. Editors everywhere pilloried, ridiculed, and tried to humiliate him. Their unceasing attacks, however, ultimately differed very little from the epithets Kearney hurled at them--a fact noted by pro-labor newspapers. "The daily press," the New York Labor Standard wrote, "as usual, denounce Mr. Kearney's speech as vulgar and profane, yet in their editorial columns use worse language to denounce the leaders of the labor movement." The Irish World was more direct. "After all, in the employment of adjectives, KEARNEY only borrows from the corrupt press itself. Who flings about nicknames and abusive epithets nearly so profusely as they do?" The Irish World conceded that Kearney was "rude," "crude," and a "simple plebeian with a confessedly limited vocabulary," but pointed out the root of the attacks on him: "It is not KEARNEY himself his calumniators hate--it is the Labor movement. Keep this in mind: It is the Labor cause they want to stab through him!"¹⁹ [See figure 7.4]



IT PAYS TO BE "THE WORKING MAN'S FRIEND."

The Press dispatches from San Francisco report Kearney, the labor agitator, as leaving that city on his Eastern tour in a special car chartered by his admirers.

Figure 7.4. While the press, with ample justification, frequently ridiculed Kearney, the cartoon above unfairly misrepresented him as a dandy, a fop, a hypocrite, and even a carpetbagger. Kearney neither drank nor smoked, nor did he ever appear well-dressed.

Source: Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, August 10, 1878.

Criticisms of Kearney extended well beyond the press. Senator James G. Blaine [R-ME] called him "'an unduly inflated sack of very bad gas.'" Ministers denounced Kearney to their congregations.²⁰ Even phrenologists got into the act. A "Professor" P. Graham, "a man with a Scotch accent," gave a lecture in September at Science Hall in New York at which he displayed many pictures of Kearney's head. "'That head,'" the phrenologist stated, "'does not exhibit one inch and a quarter of moral brain.'" He compared his subject to a murderer, adding that Kearney possessed a "forehead no higher than an African baboon's and a pair of ears as large as any average sized donkey's." Furthermore, his brain size approximated that of a parrot. "'Heaven help us,' cried the orator, gazing in horror at his own drawing, 'from the working classes that can be influenced by such a head as that.'"²¹

The phrenologist's patronizing comment poses two key questions: what was Kearney's influence on the working classes, and what effect did his presence actually have? The blatant class-based nature of Kearney's rhetoric and the often enthusiastic responses of his listeners suggest that the West Coast orator and his message "the Chinese must go" were popular with workers in the East and Midwest. Indeed, pro-labor newspapers, such as the Boston Globe and the more radical Irish World, lavished praise on Kearney as the "champion of the workingmen" and printed anti-Chinese

articles. In some places Kearney visited, labor spokesmen welcomed him warmly. Uriah S. Stephens, founder of the still-secret Knights of Labor, considered him "solid," and in a letter to Terence V. Powderly, the organization's leader, on August 3, he hoped that Kearney would "be favorably launched as an element in the Labor Movement on the Atlantic Slope." Peter J. McGuire, a founder and prominent organizer for the Socialistic Labor Party, toured with Kearney in Massachusetts and the Midwest, and socialists Albert Parsons and Philip Van Patten shared the platform with Kearney in Indianapolis and Chicago. Socialists and Greenbackers also crowded the stage in Newark and New York City.²² Such facts, however, mask the divisiveness Kearney's visit caused within these groups. Rather than make assumptions based on outward appearances we must ask other questions. Who actually attended Kearney's speeches? Why did they attend? What can be said about individuals' true thoughts and reactions based on their participation in a crowd? How did socialists, Greenbackers, and workers ultimately respond to Kearney and his message? While answers to some of these questions must remain speculative, further inquiry reveals that appearances can be deceiving: what went on on the surface differed sharply from what went on below.

Unfortunately, no demographers were present at Kearney's meetings to analyze the crowds, nor did any

reporters poll audiences to determine wealth or occupation. No photographs are known to exist. Despite these limitations, it is still possible to gauge the makeup of the crowds. Reporters often supplied brief descriptions of the audiences from city to city. These accounts, while admittedly impressionistic, reveal that Kearney's appeal crossed class lines, and, when buttressed with other evidence, show that labor leaders, socialists, and especially rank-and-file workers held very mixed opinions of Denis Kearney and his anti-Chinese message.

Some audiences, to be sure, appear to have been largely working-class. In Newark, for example, the New York Herald claimed that nine-tenths of the crowd were workingmen. They were "mainly ... Irish and German laborers," the New York Sun added, with "no conspicuous citizens of Newark in the park at any time in the evening...." On the following night in Jersey City, the New York Tribune reported, the audience "was made up largely of workingmen, but on the edge of the crowd were here and there a few well-dressed men...." Kearney's audiences in the industrial cities near Boston were also heavily filled with laborers, mechanics, and artisans. "The gathering [at Lynn]," the New York Sun reported, "was truly a gathering of workingmen...." [See figure 7.5] Shoemakers turned out en masse to greet him, and the procession that escorted him to the city common "contained about six hundred men representing all trades."

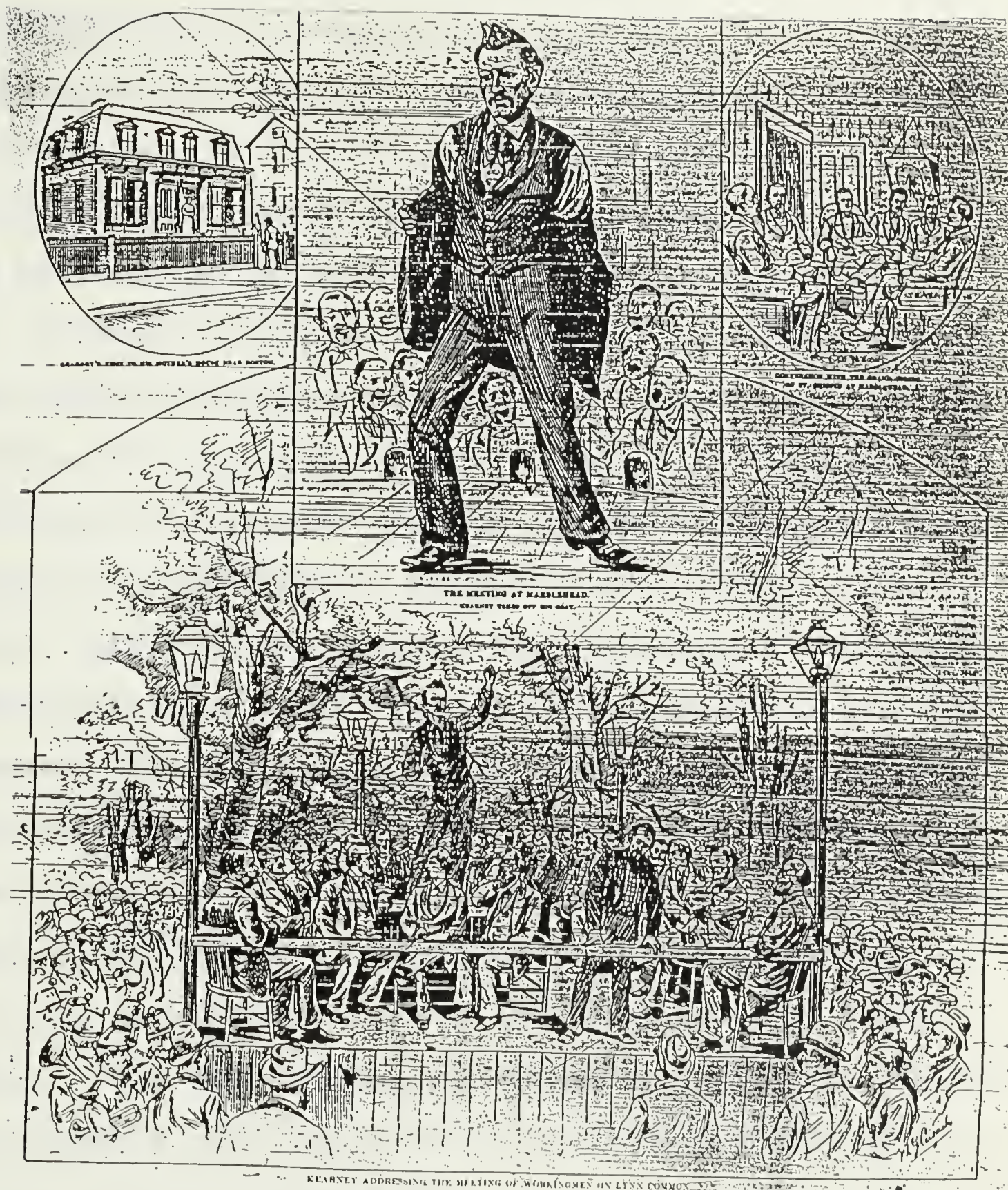


Figure 7.5. The New York Sun called the audience at Lynn "truly a gathering of workingmen," but the illustrator above showed a fairly mixed and respectable crowd. Note also the handful of women, and the musicians, bottom left.

Source: New York Graphic, August 19, 1878.

When he spoke in Marblehead on August 10, the Boston Globe wrote, about 2,000 "New England mechanics, intelligent, thinking men" turned out to hear him: "The sterner sex predominated, but here and there was a sprinkling of delicate femininity." Regardless of gender, "every seat in the hall was filled by horny-fisted Marbleheaders."²³

Elsewhere audience composition was not clear, and, in fact, became a subject of dispute. On Boston Common, for example, the Boston Globe noted simply the "throng of intelligent and earnest-faced workingmen" and called the occasion "a workingmen's meeting in every sense of the word." The New York Herald agreed, describing the crowd as being "mostly composed of horny handed laborers, curiosity seekers, and the class usually designated as 'our help.'" The Boston Transcript, however, presented a contrasting view, insisting "there was a liberal sprinkling of men who might be workmen of a higher order; either mechanics, business or professional men, and there were not a few women." The New York Sun reinforced this account: "It was a noticeable fact that many well-dressed and aristocratic-looking men were present."²⁴

Accounts of the Faneuil Hall meeting are similarly conflicting. A correspondent for the Tribune considered the meeting "[n]o doubt" all "workingmen." Both the Sun and the Globe, however, in nearly identical language, recognized "here and there the face of a well-known business man." The

Irish World stated more directly: "Business and professional men were there in respectable numbers." The Globe had the last word, concluding its description by stressing the crowd's cross-class nature: "It is but fair to say that the audience was a representative, orderly and well-behaved assemblage of American citizens, far above the average crowd that congregates to a political speech-making in the campaign season."²⁵

Here a possible explanation emerges. Pro-Kearney newspapers, such as the Boston Globe and Irish World, stressed the middle- and upper-class attendance to demonstrate Kearney's broad-based appeal while anti-Kearney newspapers, such as the New York Herald and Tribune, downplayed it to reinforce the belief that Kearney only attracted the working classes. This theory, however, does not hold up, as the anti-Kearney Transcript noted that one of his crowds in Boston "included some of the best known citizens." Nor does the theory hold true for New York City. At Union Square on September 6, a Friday night, Kearney attracted the biggest audience of his trip. The San Francisco Chronicle, the newspaper to which Kearney or his secretary telegraphed their versions of his speeches, estimated the crowd at forty to fifty thousand. The Irish World kept its estimate to 40,000, but nonetheless called it the largest crowd since the Civil War. At the low end was the Herald, claiming five thousand and the Sun guessing

seven to eight thousand. The New York Post, no friend of Kearney or the working classes, put the number at ten thousand, and the equally hostile New York Times guessed fifteen to twenty thousand. Which ever estimate one accepts, there is no denying that the crowd was, in the words of the New York World, "immense."²⁶

But the question remains: who were these thousands that cheered Kearney and "unanimously" endorsed his resolutions? "At least half the crowd--" the Irish World wrote, "judging from their dress and appearance--was composed of business or professional men." The New York Sun, an anti-Kearney but generally pro-labor newspaper (Kearney himself called it "pretty independent"), gave precisely the same breakdown: half working-class, half business and professional class. The Tribune broke its working-classes-only tradition and gave a cross-class portrait that complemented those of the Irish World and Sun: "workingmen ... did not form the main proportion of the throng, as was perhaps expected." Rather, the Tribune wrote, the crowd consisted of "representatives of all classes of society--mechanics, clerks, cartmen, merchants, etc." [See figure 7.6] Furthermore, in addition to the two hundred policemen and two battalions of mounted officers on hand, the Tribune noted "[a] knot of gentlemen" watching the speech from the posh Everett House across the square with a "number of ladies" on the balcony. The evidence from these



Tammany Hall has received its death blow to-night. (Applause.) Tammany Hall has been enabled to intimidate timid men, but you hoary-headed, thieving vampires only; they are not able to intimidate honest men. I don't care the tins of a solitary straw for all the thieves eye-pected with Tammany Hall—mingled cheering and groans. I set Tammany Hall and all its thieving lickspittle vampires at defiance here, to-night. (Loud applause.) I'm going to take advantage of my privilege as an American citizen. (Applause.) I know my rights and dare maintain them. Permission has been granted me to speak from this platform. I'm going to stay here till hell freezes over, and then I'll slide around on the ice until I get an opportunity to speak, if necessary.

PORTRAIT OF THE HAND-LOTS ORATOR AND INCIDENTS OF HIS SPEECH IN UNION SQUARE LAST FRIDAY NIGHT.

DENIS KEARNEY IN NEW YORK.

[FROM A PAINTING BY CARL BROWNE IN THE WORKINGMEN'S HEADQUARTERS AT SAN FRANCISCO AND SKETCHES BY OUR SPECIAL ARTISTS.]

Figure 7.6. One of the largest crowds in New York City since the Civil War gathered in Union Square to hear Denis Kearney speak on September 6, 1878.

Source: New York Graphic, September 9, 1878.

three newspapers, all of which differed enormously in their opinions of Kearney, points to the cross-class nature of the crowd. Kearney's attraction well transcended the working classes.²⁷

Brief descriptions of audiences elsewhere confirm the diversity of his listeners. In Indianapolis, where Kearney spoke on August 18, the Indianapolis Sun noted that the audience was "composed of all classes, from the bloated bondholder to the one dollar per day, bread and water, working man." When he spoke in Chicago two days later, the New York Herald considered the crowd "simply a scraping together of the floating population, rather than the assembling of any particular class...." The crowd was "made up in the main of laboring men, professed communists and general idlers," the Herald sneered, but "there was a fair representation of first citizens hanging on the fringes of that motley multitude...." A fiercely pro-Kearney partisan who attended agreed, noting in the language of her hero that the crowd was "interspersed with political demagogues, bummers, and monopolists." A week later, two thousand listeners gathered on the Capitol steps in Washington to hear Kearney speak. "There were few workingmen present," the Boston Journal reported. The crowd was "noisy, good natured, and brisk," the New York Sun added. "Workingmen," however, "were noticeably absent. It was a great throng of

well-dressed clerks...."* Even his surprising visit with the president--"DENNY AND RUTHY," one headline blared--failed to draw spectators from the working classes. "The proportion of laboring men present," the Alta California concluded, "was comparatively small." When he spoke in Brooklyn on September 7, the Brooklyn Eagle noted the "prolonged cheering" that greeted the Californian, and the "uproar of the crowd who were impatient to see him.... The people appeared to relish Kearney's characterizations, as they shouted and laughed as each fell from his lips." Who were these people? "Taken altogether," the Eagle continued, "it was a motley assemblage. Not more than one-half were workingmen. The balance were politicians, people of the middle classes, a few well known citizens, noisy young men and boys, and here and there a woman on the outskirts of the crowd."²⁸

It is thus apparent that in many cities persons from all segments of society flocked to hear Kearney speak. That he attracted large and diverse crowds should really not be too surprising. The man received such enormous advance publicity that easterners of all stripes couldn't help but be drawn. "His name," wrote a correspondent to the Portland (Maine) Eastern Argus, "is mentioned more times in the columns of the seven Boston daily papers than that of any

*The Sun added that one-third of the crowd was "made up of colored men." The significance of this is unclear.

other man that ever lived...." Newspapers across the political spectrum showered attention on him and turned "'a flannel-mouth Mick'" into a national celebrity. As the Chicago Times noted, "every newspaper in the land teemed with his name." Like a president whose every action is reported and discussed, Kearney became a magnet for journalists. Even the mundane--such as meeting a crackpot inventor at the Washington patent office, or bathing on Manhattan Beach at Coney Island--became news. "He was able," one observer wrote, "through the newspaper competition, and the dearth of sensations in general, to get some notoriety on his arrival here." Henry George was more blunt: "wherever he went," the author of Progress and Poverty noted, Kearney was followed "by a retinue of reporters and correspondents" so that he could "rise every morning to find the newspapers filled with him." Propelled by the fervor generated by the press and the desire to be present at newsmaking events--Kearney's rallies were sure to be reported in the next day's papers--people turned out by the thousands "to hear and see this new-fledged wonder of the Pacific slope." Kearney's dramatic style and incendiary language only enhanced his appeal. "Now, as in the days of the apostle," the Philadelphia Inquirer editorialized, "people are as ever anxious to see and hear some new thing, and among orators Mr. KEARNEY is indeed a peculiarly new thing."²⁹

Praised or denounced, Kearney was a source of wonder and fascination. "The advent of the California agitator," the Brooklyn Eagle noted, "had been looked forward to with interest and curiosity by workingmen, politicians and others, who having read the remarkable utterances of the man, desired to see and hear him." When he spoke in Newport, the Cincinnati Enquirer claimed that "most" of the listeners were "coming out of curiosity...." The Cincinnati Gazette used identical language in describing the Indianapolis crowd: "The greater part," it wrote, was "called together out of curiosity to see the man." No motivation was mentioned more prominently: the Bloomington crowd attended out of "idle curiosity," and "curiosity," various newspapers maintained, drew listeners in Chicago, Philadelphia, and Baltimore.³⁰

Curiosity to see the highly-touted "mountebank drayman" was no doubt a major factor in drawing crowds. So was amusement. "It is as good as a circus to attend a Kearney meeting," one detractor noted. "Dennis is the manager, clown, and the whole show combined."** With noisy parades and processions to attract onlookers, followed by rousing music from brass bands or male trios, a Kearney rally was novel entertainment for a quiet summer evening. And it was free (although Kearney did pass around a hat after each

**Although Kearney spelled his first name "Denis," newspapers often wrote it as "Dennis."

speech). Theater and concert halls could hardly compete with the excitement of a media event and the oratory of a compelling never-before-seen speaker. "He was circus and clown combined," the Boston Transcript noted disparagingly, "and the attraction proved great enough to hold the spectators pretty well together."³¹

The spectators also became part of the act. Kearney, a master showman, constantly played to the audience and invited them to join in the fun. They in turn responded with cheers, upraised hands, and "roars of deafening applause." "Hilarious merriment" greeted some comments, "derisive and slanderous epithets" poured forth at others. To signal approval or disapproval, spectators clapped or hissed at appropriate moments and shouted out various phrases on cue. Hecklers showed up to razz Kearney and he razzed them right back to the delight of the audience. His speeches were like a modern-day sports event, unimaginable without a lusty, volatile crowd cheering, hooting, and booing. At Faneuil Hall, the audience "shouted and yelled its applause at every mention of the word 'hell,' or 'thief,' or 'villain,' or 'bondholder,'" a correspondent to the New York Tribune reported, "and were always ready with a horse laugh for anything that savored of rowdyism." The Boston Common crowd responded similarly. Kearney's "profanity and scurrilous, dirty epithets 'took' in a certain sense at first," the Boston Transcript noted, "and

were greeted with laughter and applause." As the speech wore on, however, "the laughter began to predominate over the applause, and people listened and thought it fun, getting amusement not only out of what was said, but out of the speaker's manner of saying it." The New York World also noted how listeners enjoyed Kearney's rough language. "It is curious," the editor wrote, "to see the zest with which crowds hail a denunciation of 'moon-eyed lepers' or 'leecherous bondholders' or 'slimy reporters.'" Curiosity, amusement, and participation all contributed to the swelling of Kearney's audiences. His speeches also proved something of a catharsis for many listeners, providing a chance to release their anger and frustration. "It may be nearer the mark to suggest," the New York World pointed out, "that men go to his meetings and applaud because they like to hear their betters abused and listen to flattering schemes for a change in society which shall put down the mighty from their seats and exalt them of low degree."³²

As Kearney rallies were more entertainment than discourse, more political theater than political discussion the meaning of crowd reactions remains open to conjecture. Does a momentary positive response by listeners actually indicate sincere approval and heartfelt agreement? As one observer noted, applauding Kearney's resolutions was part of the fun. "The voting on every proposition submitted by Kearney was almost unanimous," the observer wrote of the New

York rally, "many who had no sympathy whatever with his views holding up both hands, or loudly exclaiming 'Aye,' and then laughing as the result was announced by the speaker as unanimous."³³

The significance of the crowd reactions must be weighed carefully. The fact that Kearney declared every resolution everywhere he spoke as passing unanimously reveals more about him than the true sentiments of his listeners. Kearney was simply not a person who could tolerate opposition. Like an evangelist, his goal was to stir a crowd, and doubtless many people showed up purely for the sake of cheering. As the Boston Journal noted of the crowd in Lynn, some people "turned away disgusted at his violent harangue," while others "were prepared to applaud indiscriminately his every utterance...." The substance of his utterances may well have been secondary. The extreme nature of Kearney's speeches and resolutions also challenges credibility that his listeners fully endorsed them. In Washington, D.C., for example, a police captain had attempted to prevent Kearney from speaking but Kearney held out and spoke anyhow. Referring to this incident the next night in Philadelphia, he offered the following resolution to the crowd: "That we recognize Kearney's action on that occasion as one of the noblest examples of heroism in ancient or modern history, and worthy of public recognition at the hands of a free people." The crowd, needless to say,

"unanimously" approved. Can we accept this as an honest gauge of his listeners' opinions? Or was it more the result of a riveting speaker able to stir a crowd to a frenzy? To understand Kearney's genuine impact we must look beyond the temporary crowd reactions and analyze instead the response to his tour.³⁴

First, however, it must be noted that Kearney often failed to move his audience. Of the fourteen speeches Kearney gave on his tour outside of Massachusetts from August 18 to September 12, crowd response was frequently mixed. Or perhaps it depended on one's point of view. The ever-partial San Francisco Chronicle, for example, reported that he spoke "to a very attentive and appreciative audience" in Bloomington, Illinois, and was "received with great applause." The Chicago Inter-Ocean, however, reported, "There was no sympathy apparent, and no enthusiasm." The New York Herald gave a mixed review: "Although he held the attention of his audience, he was applauded only twice and evidently found but few warm admirers." In Philadelphia, the Inquirer commented that he received "Some cheering, but not a great deal, and what came seemed forced." In Indianapolis, the Chicago Tribune remarked, "his speech fell on dull ears, and was not applauded by a dozen persons." The Cincinnati Gazette agreed: "His remarks fell flat, profanity and blackguardism being the only parts that were applauded." The Cincinnati

Enquirer noted the same effect when he spoke five days later: "save when he talked of 'shooting 'em,' of 'wading in blood up to our knees,' and of 'hell boiling over,' he did not seem to be making a hit." Frequently, as in Boston, Washington, and New York, much of the crowd simply drifted away during the speech. In Chicago, "there was but a small fragment of the original gathering left ... when the 'wind up' had been reached." Perhaps the thrill of seeing Kearney speak for a few minutes sated some listeners' curiosity. Except for Boston, he seldom spoke on more than one day in any city, presumably because a crowd would not have gathered a second time. Sometimes it was Kearney that dulled the crowd, other times it was his message. "In California his great card was the 'Chinese,'" wrote a correspondent to the New York Tribune who heard him speak in Faneuil Hall. "Here he finds that falls flat, and last night he tried to raise some feeling on the subject, but could not raise a spark. He only spoke a few moments on the [Chinese] question, and seeing his hearers cared nothing for it, he let it drop." The New York Sun agreed that the Chinese issue was not much of a crowd-pleaser. Summing up the response to Kearney, one poet punned:

And then with one accord the crowd,
With cheers hilarious, curses loud,
And heer a sneer and there a cough,
Looked once at DIN, and then walked off.³⁵

Did Kearney ultimately turn off as many listeners as he aroused? As with all descriptions of a press eager to abuse

him, these accounts of audience disinterest remain suspect. Other evidence, however, indicates that Kearney's speeches caused vast dissension among labor leaders, socialists, Greenbackers, and the working classes. In Philadelphia, for example, leaders of the Greenback-Labor Party were "considerably agitated in regard to his appearance" and were divided over whether they should endorse him. At a meeting shortly before his arrival, Greenbackers debated greeting Kearney at the train station. James L. Wright, a founding member of the Knights of Labor and at whose house the gathering was held, said that "it was incumbent upon the party to give Kearney a reception, as he was coming to speak in the interest of the Labor party." A reporter for the Philadelphia Inquirer mentioned that other remarks followed "but there was a noticeable lack of anything like enthusiasm, and the arrangements decided upon were of the simplest character." A proposition to hold a torchlight demonstration was overwhelmingly voted down. Also rejected were hiring a band to play music and having "the presence of distinguished men" on the platform (which would "give his remarks as much effect as possible") while Kearney spoke. The consensus of the meeting, the reporter concluded, was "in the interest of as much quiet as possible...."³⁶

The Greenback-Labor Party had since its inception been divided into numerous factions. The Inquirer reporter, well

aware of this, made a special point of interviewing what he termed the "labor men" of the organization:

It was found that there was more curiosity to see Kearney and hear him speak than there was confidence in anything he may have to say. They did not hesitate to say that he was without argument, and that he relied upon a tirade of abuse to carry him through. Further conversation with the Labor men developed a feeling of disapproval of the agitators' [sic] coming to Philadelphia. Many of them said they could not see that it would do any good, and might do harm.

Several Greenbackers outright opposed his coming. Frank P. Dewees, state chairman of the party, purposely left town so as to avoid him. At a Greenback rally a few days later, Samuel R. Mason, candidate for governor, "gave Kearney a sharp rap." Plans once afoot to take Kearney to the coal regions of Pennsylvania were quickly abandoned. The Greenbackers of the Quaker City were not alone in their fear of being associated with Kearney. "The Socialists [too] ... repudiate him and say that he is paid by parties who are not known and have a purpose of their own to forward."³⁷

The Pennsylvania Greenbackers shared the sentiments of third party activists across the nation. In New York, Greenback editor Walter H. Shupe was asked if Kearney was "a favorite in the party?" "'By no means!'" he replied. "'We do not indorse him....'" Leaders of the party who had initially invited Kearney to speak in New York City later tried to renege on the commitment. "His rhetorical extravagances," the Washington Star reported, "have convinced the more reflecting men of the greenback party

that they will lose more than they will gain by him, while many of the workingmen who were disposed to look upon him as the man for the times, have come to the conclusion that he is a good man to have as little to do with as possible." The venerable Peter Cooper, the party's presidential candidate in 1876, found Kearney repugnant and refused him permission to speak in Cooper Union as originally planned. Cooper Union, an open forum for diverse political views, it might be added, had seldom barred anyone from its doors. Perhaps Kearney's dismissal of Cooper as "an old granny" when he spoke in Washington had been too much for the greenback patriarch to take.³⁸

What survives of the Greenback-Labor press is equally hostile to Kearney. One of the party's leading exponents, the Indianapolis Sun, criticized "the California agitator" for spewing forth "epithets and wholesale denunciations" and dealing "too sparingly in arguments." Kearney, the Sun wrote, was not an organizer but a "disorganizer." Pomeroy's Democrat, a Greenback organ from Chicago, was more adamant. "Kearney's ideas are of the pig, piggy," its editor wrote. "He is no workingman or friend of the workingmen." Calling him "coarse, brutal, [and] ignorant," the editor concluded: "The medicine he prescribes comes in such a mass of mental manure that it turns the stomach before it is swallowed." The Greenback press overall showed far less interest in Kearney than did the mainstream press. Third party editors

damned him either with outright criticism or by simply ignoring him. The Oshkosh (Wisconsin) Greenback Standard, for example, briefly mentioned Kearney's arrival in the East and then totally neglected his tour through the Midwest. The St. Paul (Minnesota) Anti-Monopolist also gave him short shrift and ignored his Midwestern swing. Greenbackers were, if not bothered, then bored by Kearney. As a Greenback poet for the Indianapolis Sun surmised, his message fared poorly this side of the Rocky Mountains:

But your high seasoned spaich
It can only annoy,
For the Aist aint the West
Be a jugfull, me bhoy.³⁹

Kearney was a political man rather than a workingman, and his anti-union attitude frustrated workers and labor reformers. In Washington, D.C., the National Workingmen's Assembly wanted little to do with him. "'I did not know that he was coming,'" said J.F. Clarkson of the Pressmen's union the day Kearney arrived, "'and he certainly did not come on the invitation of the assembly.'" G.W. Speier, the Assembly's financial secretary, added that some members would attend his speech "'but shall take no part in the meeting.'" No member of the capital city's central labor organization would endorse Kearney or his views, and at a mass rally they sponsored two weeks earlier, one speaker made a veiled reference to the Californian: "He cautioned them [the workers] against believing in those who travel about the country professing to be friends of the

workingman, but who only appeal to the prejudices, and do nothing to benefit them." At the National Workingmen's Assembly's regular weekly meetings, Kearney's name never even came up for discussion. In Chicago, labor organizations "did nothing unitedly" to generate interest for Kearney's appearance. This is particularly surprising because the city's shoemakers were on strike and rumors abounded that employers were planning to import Chinese workers from San Francisco. Consequently, the correspondent to the New York Herald reported with what must have been puzzlement, "For some reason the trades unions of Chicago have not entered into Mr. Kearney's mission here with that spontaneity of enthusiasm which was probably looked for...." Furthermore, the Chicago Times added, when Kearney attended union meetings in the city before his rally, "he was laughed down and criticized by socialists and trade unionists even in his own presence." Workers were no more excited in Indianapolis. "It was thought all the labor organizations of the city would fall in at the court house" for the parade, the Sentinel noted, but not more than seventy people showed up for the Sunday afternoon procession. The speech itself attracted just a few hundred. In Baltimore only two hundred people showed up to hear Kearney speak, a celebration of a Civil War battle apparently drawing off many prospective spectators.⁴⁰

These responses indicate a growing dissatisfaction with Kearney in the East and Midwest. They do not, however, provide explicit reasons for this dissatisfaction. Was it Kearney's incendiary language they opposed, his anti-unionism, his presumed lack of ideas, or his crusade against the Chinese? Judging by the various criticisms of diverse working-class organizations and rank-and-file members, all these reasons contributed, but the Chinese issue was singled out prominently. St. Louis provides a case in point. The gateway city of Missouri, with its smelting works, rolling mills, refineries, foundries, packing-houses, machine shops, and breweries, had become one of the major manufacturing centers in the Midwest. Its 300,000 inhabitants included large German, Bohemian, and native working-class populations. Workers had come near taking over the city during the railroad strike in 1877, and "commune-style" committee of workers helped direct affairs for several days. St. Louis was also the only major city east of the Rockies to which Chinese workers had been imported and some were still working at Jaynes barrel factory when Denis Kearney rode into town. Despite the city's radical background and proletarian makeup, workers' organizations paid scant attention to the advance warning they had received of his pending arrival. "Not a workingman or socialist was at the depot to meet him," the New York Herald noted, and the "teamster of San Francisco" walked quietly to his hotel room

"without attracting the slightest attention." No money had been gathered to pay his expenses and no hall hired for the rally. "He received," the Alta California reported, "no official recognition from any workingmen's organization." Even the pro-Kearney San Francisco Chronicle had to admit that "[n]o arrangements had been made for a reception...." As a result, Kearney ended up speaking from a hastily-constructed platform which collapsed during his speech and, ironically, upset a row of Chinese lanterns and started a fire. The commotion from his "downfall" matched the controversy of his appearance.⁴¹

"Neither the German nor the English sections of the socialist party," the New York Herald claimed, "will take him in hand, but they both denounce him, and speak of him in contemptuous terms." Interviews in the local press confirm and explain this antipathy. "'I do not think Kearney will ever do any good for the people,'" one socialist questioned by the St. Louis Post commented. "'The workingmen of to-day are more advanced than they were a few years ago, and the consequence is that Kearney who never chose to learn anything, is behind the times.'" Kearney, he claimed, was uneducated, lacked ideas, and proposed violence rather than solutions. "'He is not reconstructive enough,'" the critic observed. "'The Socialists believe that every thing and person should be level, and to level the party was formed. But their theory of the manner in which all things should be

leveled is widely different from Mr. Kearney's.... I am disgusted," he concluded, "'with Kearney and the principles he advocates.'" An unnamed foundry worker was more specific about what Kearney lacked. He had attended Kearney's speech with "great hopes that he would do much for the people," but left completely disillusioned. "'His thoughts are not connected and his talk is rambling,'" the foundry worker stated. "'He wandered from one subject to another with great rapidity, and there is no logic in any of his arguments.... The crowd, or the intelligent portion of it, last night were thoroughly disgusted with him. His views upon Chinese emigration will never be seconded by the people here, and his incendiary language is denounced by his supposed coadjutors, the Socialists.'"42

This anonymous foundry worker, it appears, was on target. The Voice of Labor, the English-language socialist newspaper in St. Louis, claimed "that Socialists could not, as a party, indorse Mr. Kearney...." The Volksstimme des Westens, organ of the German socialists in St. Louis, dismissed him as "the Chinese bouncer" and wanted nothing to do with him. The Communist, yet another local socialist paper, satirized Kearney's racist appeal by noting "a Chinaman has the same right to continue in this country the Celestial diet of rats, dogs and rice ... as an Irishman ... has the right to live on his national food, to wit, 'murphies'...." John E. Cope, a shoe-fitter born in England

and treasurer of the St. Louis branch of the Socialistic Labor Party, labeled Kearney "a humbug or a fool." Cope, who had been arrested during the "labor riots" in 1877, argued "that a Chinaman has as much right here as himself ... or as Mr. Kearney...." Even the mainstream St. Louis Post, which had conducted "long conversations with ... the most prominent workers in the labor cause," concluded: "Kearney's ideas on Chinese emigration are directly against the principle underlying socialism, that all men were created equal, with equal rights and privileges, and that a man, be he a Chinese or an Irishman, has a right to earn his living in whatsoever manner he chooses, provided he does not interfere with others."⁴³

St. Louis radicals and workers were hardly alone in their criticisms of Kearney and his anti-Chinese rhetoric. Individuals identifying themselves as "Toil," "A Workingman," and the like sent letters of protest to various newspapers across the country. "Mechanic," from Washington, D.C., for example, condemned Kearney in the New York Tribune as a "flimsy fraud" who could "only bungle and rave and tear his English into smithereens giving us his views." A like-minded writer to the New York Sun simply urged Kearney to "close his mouth" and stop breeding dissension: "Workingmen are composed of all creeds and nationalities, and for a so-called representative to denounce any one wing of that body shows an utter disregard of self-respect." "He has been

blinded by the Chinese question," a subscriber to the New York Witness wrote. "The man who would propose to dump into the sea the people of any nationality, to improve the existing state of things, has too poor a head, and too weak a heart to be a leader of the masses."⁴⁴

Such letters, of course, were to be expected in the mainstream press which strove to demonstrate working-class antipathy to Kearney. The validity of these letters would be suspect if not supported by other sources. The Boston Pilot presents an interesting case. This leading Irish Catholic weekly had subscribers throughout the country. Echoing the mainstream press, the Pilot denounced Kearney as an empty-headed rabble-rouser who lacked ideas. Predictably, numerous letters it printed seconded its view and harshly criticized the Californian for "his meaningless and scurrilous language," his violent and "gross profanity," and his "ignorance unpardonable." As one irate reader said, "he is no workingman's friend." What is interesting, however, is that for years the Pilot had opposed Chinese immigration and thus their editorials attacking Kearney made no mention of his anti-Chinese stand. Their readers did. Criticizing Kearney for his "cheap rhetoric" and lack of argument, "An Irish Workman" wrote:

It is not enough to say, for instance, 'The Chinese must go.' Not many years ago a similar war-cry, 'No Irish need apply,' was echoed and re-echoed throughout America by bigots as blind, ungenerous and intolerant of question as any in the world. For one workingman I should hate to give up my situation to a Chinaman or

anybody else who offered to do my work as well for a fourth of my wages. Yet the proposition to drive the Chinaman into or beyond the Pacific is so shocking to every preconceived idea of justice or wisdom, so hostile to the glorious traditions of this free land, that I want something more than Mr. Kearney's key-note before I join what is at best a cry for proscription.

Kearney, he concluded, should rely on "reason and not prejudice." Another Pilot subscriber agreed. "Ours is not the mission of the bullet nor the bully," wrote "O'Brien" from Port Huron, Michigan, fearful of where Kearney's rhetoric would lead. "He is organizing a Know-Nothing sentiment on the Chinese question, which if carried a trifle farther, may embrace all foreigners--for many people yet live who would like to see Catholic institutions again exposed to the fire of the fanatic and the fool...."⁴⁵

Considerable skepticism and dismay from labor leaders and socialists in the East greeted Kearney most everywhere he went. "I am disgusted with Kearney," wrote Terence V. Powderly, Mayor of Scranton and leader of the Knights of Labor, to a confidante on August 24, and "if he speaks as the papers say he does he will injure us[.]" Justus Schwab, prominent Brooklyn socialist and saloon-keeper, agreed. Upon Kearney's arrival in Boston, Schwab told a reporter he was "quite sure ... that the regular labor organizations [in New York City] would have nothing to do with the California agitator." A week later, after reading his speeches, the blond-haired brewer added, "Mr. Kearney ... has not got the hang of things here yet ... the ways of the people out on

the Pacific slope differ greatly from those in the Atlantic States."⁴⁶ [See figure 7.7] His colleague, Hugh McGregor, a jewelry worker and former editor of the New York Socialist, took the same position. Commenting on the Chinese issue in particular, McGregor noted, "'we doubt whether he can interest the Eastern workingmen upon that subject.'" Across the river in New Jersey, Karl Speyer of the International Labor Union sounded the same theme. He and his colleagues "declared that the trade societies would have nothing to do with Kearney, and it was the general opinion among them that everywhere in the East the Kearney tactics would be condemned by the laboring classes." Massachusetts socialists were equally leery. "Our members," a Boston correspondent wrote the National Socialist in Cincinnati, "are dissatisfied at the prospect of a Kearney movement."⁴⁷

Midwestern socialists were also fearful. "'Kearney's fight was against Chinese labor,'" said Cincinnati socialist Charles A. Thompson. He simply "'does not understand the labor question.'" His colleague Edward Hoffman reiterated these comments, calling Kearney "'a humbug and an ass.'" Nearby in Indianapolis, socialists "'threw him over,'" in the words of one member, "'for they had no use for him ... they think him an ignorant fraud.'" Chicago socialists were more explicit. "'I don't think anything of him,'" said George Schilling, a party activist and future Socialist



Figure 7.7. Despite Schwab's criticisms of Kearney, Puck portrayed him welcoming "the new Messiah" to New York with a giant glass of beer. Note also Kearney's stereotyped Irish features and the Chinese character stabbed through the heart. In the background, news of Kearney's tour is being wired across the country.

Source: Puck, July 31, 1878.

Party candidate for mayor. Asked by a reporter if Kearney might help the party, he responded: "'He couldn't do us any good. He don't know how.'" Sam Goldwater, a Polish cigar maker who would shortly become president of the Chicago Trades and Labor Council, was more emphatic. "'I don't see what use he can be to the laboring men,'" he said. "'Why, I know 7-year-old boys that know more, or at least as much, about the labor question as he does.'" Calling Kearney's ideas "'all nonsense and bosh,'" Goldwater zeroed in on the Chinese issue while recounting a conversation he had held with the Californian:

Talking about the Chinese question, he [Kearney] couldn't see that they are likely to ask as much money, and try to get as much money, as anybody else if there is any show for it. He quickly ended the talk with a remark like this: 'Oh, if you are for the Chinese I can't argue with you; you can go to hell.' I told him that I was not for the Chinese, nor for any set of men, but that I believed in workingmen's organization and in socialism and socialistic principles and practices. I tried to get him to talk about some other place than California, and to get him off the local Chinese question there.... I asked him how it was that times were hard in England, in Ireland, in Russia, in Germany, in Poland, where there was no Chinese, but he had nothing to say; in fact he couldn't say anything about it at all. Now, of what use to the labor unions or to the socialistic party is such a man as that? None.

Socialists and workers seem to have formed a consensus on Kearney. "'Without exception,'" said one person who had polled "'leading trades-union men'" in Chicago, "'they say he is a man without any thought without any brains....'" Those who heard him speak, he continued, found him "'ignorant, ridiculous, and of no weight or influence with

the masses whatever. In California he may have frightened Chinatown, but he is no good to the labor movement of this country.'" Albert Parsons was one of few who defended him. The future Haymarket martyr compared Kearney to a "'battering ram'" and thought he might help tear workers away from the two major parties. Alderman Frank Stauber, however, the first candidate of the Socialistic Labor Party to win office in Chicago, probably gave the most succinct summary of the views of socialists and workers. "'We do not believe in his style of agitation,'" Stauber said. "'We do not want to drive out the Chinese....'"⁴⁸

Peter J. McGuire may have been the most direct. The Socialistic Labor Party's foremost organizer shared the platform with Kearney in Boston and Indianapolis. He gave a brief but incisive analysis of Kearney's appeal: "'I consider him a very able man, thoroughly honest and earnest in the movement.... Kearney gives vent to long suppressed feelings of indignation and resentment.'" McGuire then stated the differences in their approaches. Whereas Kearney appeals to emotions, "'I wish to convince men with reason that we are right and that our claims are just.'" Their differences went deeper. McGuire criticized Kearney for taking "'diametrically opposite views from those of the Socialists about trades-unions.'" He also criticized him for his views on the Chinese. "'The course Mr. Kearney wishes the people to adopt in relation to Chinese

immigration is opposed to the first principle of socialism," McGuire explained to a reporter in St. Louis. "'I do not believe the Chinese should come here as vassals already formed to other men, but if they come voluntarily to make this country a home, I do not see how we can prevent them and allow people of other nations to come.'" McGuire's comments show that people could support Kearney while disagreeing with his anti-Chinese stand.⁴⁹

Socialist and labor press editorials backed up the opinions of these various individuals. "Kearney is an agitator, rather than an organizer," lamented the Boston Labor Standard. "But there seemed but little point to his agitation. He neither advocated principled measures nor organization." The National Socialist agreed, noting that Kearney's rhetoric "is the language of one who wants success without principle." Henrich Ende, editor of the Ohio Volkszeitung, a Cincinnati socialist weekly, was more adamant in condemning Kearney's "senseless, bombastic abuses." Kearney, Ende noted in August, "has shown not a single good quality," and to reprint his speeches "would be, indeed, a mere waste of paper." The New York Labor Standard took the same line. It criticized Kearney for offering no genuine measures on which workers could unite and for scapegoating the Chinese when the real issue was contract labor. "What is most needed at this time is economic organization," the Labor Standard advised in mid-August,

"not political excitement.... Congress must stop this contract system under which men are bound to service in this country.... [A]s some of the men who have suffered for the defence of some of us who came here--Irish, English and German cheap laborers--so shall we protest against making the Chinaman the victim of our hate."⁵⁰

A correspondent to the National Socialist was also disenchanted with Kearney. After hearing him speak in Marblehead on August 10, "Precursor," a regular columnist, wrote that "Kearney has, in my judgement, achieved a reputation scarcely warranted by his abilities." The correspondent continued:

It is quite possible that he may ultimately discover that the American people East care less for the Chinese question than Californians do, and that, after all, its importance has been vastly over-rated. Cheap Chinese labor is no worse than cheap Irish, or Italian, or German, or any other foreign or home-grown cheap labor. Expatriation is no remedy for the evils resulting from competition. In the present case, for instance, while it would be just to enact prohibitory laws forbidding the making of servile contracts on foreign shores, and the Socialistic Labor Party favors the enactment of such laws, it would be as wicked as it would be unjust to attempt the banishment of an hundred thousand human beings.

One month later, in September 1878, the National Socialist moved from Cincinnati to Chicago and dropped the word "National" from its masthead. The changes in location and name did not alter the editors' attitudes toward Kearney. In its debut issue, the Socialist reprinted an article on Kearney from the pro-labor Indianapolis Times which, it stated, "exactly meets our ideas on this subject." Kearney

was a "demagogue" and a "disgrace," the Times wrote, whose "uncertain language is thrown out to workingmen reeking with the odor of the political gambling hell." Kearney's trip east, the Times concluded, had set back the labor movement "for a quarter of a century to come." A week later, the Socialist approvingly quoted another journal, the Reformer: "'We do not oppose the Chinees as a Chinaman, but we oppose his being brought here as a slave under contract. We should oppose English, Irish, Welsh, or Germans did they come here under the same circumstances.'"⁵¹

Perhaps B.E.G. Jewett of Evansville, Indiana put it best. Jewett was a frequent contributor to the labor and socialist press. On the very day that Kearney arrived in Boston, the New York Labor Standard reprinted a letter he had written in response to a charge that he did not "understand the Chinese question." Not without humor Jewett wrote:

... we cannot afford to run the Chinese, Indian or negro into the Pacific ocean (not a pacific condition) as the monopolist and greed-monger has done the Indian and poor white men. 'The Chinese must go' doctrine gives capitalistic wealth mongers a stick to crack our own head with, and had therefore better go slow in that direction as temporary success will prove ultimate failure. Make the Chinese your allies, not your enemies. [emphasis in original.]⁵²

The outlook of key socialists and the socialist press on Kearney is thus fairly clear. Although welcomed in some places as a forceful speaker who could rivet a crowd, most remained skeptical of his abilities, fearful of his message,

and disgusted by his race-baiting. The socialists, of course, were only a tiny group numerically and far to the left of most workers. Although a vocal and important minority, they can hardly be considered representative of the working classes. The handful of workers who dared to write anti-Kearney letters to the pro-Kearney press may come closer, and their sentiments, in conjunction with the socialists, indicate a strong undercurrent of discontent. Still, their words remain too scattered and inconclusive to be accepted as the voice of labor. The final judgment on Kearney and his anti-Chinese agitation must ultimately be left to ordinary workers. They made their judgment known partly with their pen and partly with their bodies. In the end workers just stopped coming to hear him speak. And those that showed up came to laugh and to jeer.

Even though they attended Kearney's speeches and sometimes applauded him, workers did not necessarily endorse his anti-Chinese message. One method of discerning the distinctions workers made between Kearney and the Chinese issue is by examining the countless placards, banners, and transparencies workers carried to his rallies. Greeting him in Boston on his arrival were such slogans as "Equal rights for all; the land must be free; down with monopoly." Other mottoes inscribed "in roughly drawn letters," the New York Times noted, included "the people cannot be put down; tyrants tried that for thousands of years" and "The contract

system must be abolished." Workers chose these slogans and paraded them everywhere Kearney spoke. "Labor to the Rescue," blared one in Brooklyn. "We've Burst Our Bonds," read another. "No Monopoly, No Usury," read a third. The same message appeared in other languages. "Nicht herrenmehr und nicht mehrknechte dis arbeit fruct sie jedermann," said one of several German banners in Indianapolis. ["No more lords, no more aristocrats, this work benefits everyone."] And in a language no one could fail to understand, one person carried a banner with a cartoon of "a fat bondholder swinging from a lamp post." The caption read: "Sure cure for corrupt officials: Kearney has come." Workers knew well beforehand the substance of a Kearney speech, the subjects he would raise, and the subjects he would denounce. They had plenty of time to come up with mottoes and devise slogans. In all the placards and banners that workers carried or that hung on platforms when Kearney spoke, not a single one reported by the press mentioned Chinese immigration. Out of the hundreds and perhaps thousands of banners Kearney's visit inspired, the evidence suggests that not a single one reinforced the sentiments for which the "doughty Dennis" was best known. Chinese exclusion was not a cause with which the working classes east of the Rocky Mountains wanted to be associated. As one placard carried by a striker at a mass rally in Paterson, New Jersey, just days after Kearney's tour of the region said, "No Question

of Creed, Color, or Nationality in the I.L.U. [International Labor Union]."53

Workers did not jump onto the anti-Chinese bandwagon, and soon they were not even jumping onto Kearney's bandwagon. After his month-long tour of the Midwest and Atlantic coast, Kearney returned to Massachusetts in mid-September. Confident of his popularity he planned to stump the state for Ben Butler who had just been nominated for governor by the Greenback-Labor Party. More than five hundred delegates from fifty-seven towns had gathered in Boston to endorse Butler and a full Greenback slate. They also endorsed a platform that, among other things, favored greenbacks and attacked both the Associated Press and contract prison labor. Despite the wide-ranging nature of these issues--a state government, after all, had no power to issue paper money and little control over the media--the Massachusetts Greenbackers remained silent on Chinese immigration. Kearney picked up on this at once. "Why this omission and procrastination?" he asked in a sharply-worded manifesto the following week. "To me it savors too much of compromise, as though some conniving was going on behind the scenes." Although praising Butler, Kearney accused the convention of selling out to the Democrats. He denounced the "high-feathered bards" who ran the Greenback-Labor Party and threatened to organize a rival faction with rival candidates. He started a campaign newspaper and called for

a Workingmen's convention to meet in Boston on October 17, later revised to October 10. The Californian also vowed to "stump the State" to assure victory.⁵⁴

As it worked out, Kearney scarcely left the Boston area for the next six weeks. No workingmen's convention was ever held. (The date planned, in fact, October 10, was one of the rare occasions on which Kearney was out of town.) No copies of his newspaper exist, and lack of mention of them in the pro- or anti-Kearney journals suggests they never made it to the newsstands. Butler forces kept--and widened--their distance from him as the campaign wore on, and, a week before the election, accused Kearney of working for his defeat. Perhaps the crowning insult of all, crowds started voicing their disapproval and turned Kearney rallies into shouting matches.

In Worcester in September, a listener yelled, "I don't want to hear you," and Kearney shot back, "You can go plumb to hell." A week later he attempted to speak in Boston but "was hustled off the stage." On October 1, Kearney tried to stir a crowd of 2,000 in East Boston. Instead, the crowd razzed him, laughed at him, and literally attacked him. "He was pelted with potatoes and onions," the Boston Transcript noted. Another witness reported "rotten tomatoes" being flung at him. The event became even more ludicrous when some boys began burning gunpowder beneath the stand from which Kearney was speaking. The explosions and bright

lights finally silenced the orator. "Mr. Kearney said he was obliged to stop," the Boston Globe reported tersely, "because of noise on the outskirts of the crowd."⁵⁵

The next night was little different. Kearney spoke in Brookline to a crowd of about six hundred. His speech "fell very flat," the Boston Journal reported. He was "applauded but little" and "interrupted several times by derisive cries and yells." He was also interrupted by people who hurled eggs, turnips, and "other missiles" at him. Kearney became so flustered by the barrage that he shouted that someone ought to "take a pistol and shoot" whoever had struck him. The evening became a "complete fiasco," and even the Boston Globe admitted that the numerous hecklers and stone throwers had marred the occasion. The following night he spoke in South Boston; this occasion was more peaceful, only because much of the crowd drifted away "after listening to him for a few minutes." These three nights marked the burgeoning of workers' discontent toward Kearney. As the Boston Transcript had editorialized on September 30, Kearney, "having reached that point where he is jeered by his own diminished gatherings of motley idlers, is no longer dangerous to anybody but Butler...."⁵⁶

Butler, indeed, remained leery of Kearney. The Lowell Congressman had a fair shot of capturing the governor's mansion in November and didn't want the association with the Californian and the anti-Chinese movement to jeopardize his

election. In his only comment on Chinese immigration during the campaign, made in response to questions posed by Kearney in early August, Butler revealed an antipathy to Chinese workers but stated clearly their right to emigrate. He did not again raise the subject, and hoped Kearney wouldn't either. As the Boston correspondent reported to the Pittsfield Sun on September 23, "I am informed on the best authority that the Butler men are prepared to 'shut down' on Dennis...." A correspondent to the New York World similarly noted two weeks later that Butler supporters had been "working hard with Kearney of late" to moderate his language. Butler, himself, tried to walk both sides of the fence. "'Kearney,'" he told a reporter in late September, "'is working on his own responsibility.'" He characterized him as "an uneducated workingman" who spoke the language of the common laborer. He added: "'I neither criticise nor condemn him.'" Butler evidently wanted the votes Kearney might presumably bring him but not the negative publicity that followed him. During the course of the campaign Butler tried to remain neutral over Kearney, neither endorsing nor denouncing him. He seldom even mentioned his name.⁵⁷

Butler campaigned in earnest for the governorship. During the second week of September he spoke to rousing audiences throughout Massachusetts. After securing the nomination of the Greenbackers and causing a split among Democrats, he began a whirlwind tour of the state from the

Berkshires to Cape Cod.⁵⁸ "A more interesting or important campaign I have never seen," wrote a Boston correspondent to the Indianapolis Sun, "... never, not even in the campaign of 1860, have I seen such crowds or such enthusiasm." Everywhere Butler went the "Tribe of Benjamin" turned out en masse to hear him, and as Kearney's crowds diminished, Butler's swelled. Endorsed by both Wendell Phillips and Peter Cooper, Butler spoke up to three hours at a clip to audiences averaging two to five thousand, with 25,000 cheering him on in Fall River three days before the election. Butler gave no fewer than sixty speeches during the autumn, as many as three or four a day. At Faneuil Hall, the New York Times noted, he "attracted a crowd as vast and as mixed as that which [had] greeted Kearney" back in August. "Packed" houses and "enthusiastic" audiences greeted him throughout the state with such banners as "This is the People's Hour," "One of the Last Battles Between Aristocracy and Democracy," "We are Coming, Uncle Benjamin, 200,000 Strong," and "B.F.B.; Brave, Fearless, Beloved." As the Sun correspondent noted, "the magic name of Butler ... has become the synonym of financial reform and honest administration."⁵⁹

The Globe reprinted all his speeches, usually on the front page. The regular topics included criticisms of Hayes and the Republican Party, advocacy of greenbacks and economic changes, and popular labor issues such as the

eight-hour day, universal suffrage, and a new homestead act to assist unemployed Eastern workers resettle in the West. To demonstrate his broad appeal, Butler also made several out-of-state speeches in New York City, Indianapolis, and Terre Haute, Indiana (where more than 20,000 attended). In not one single speech all autumn did Butler ever make a reference to Chinese immigration. Nor in the places where he spoke did any workers or labor organizations raise the issue. If Chinese immigration was, as Kearney insisted, an issue that would rouse workers and voters, it is curious that Butler and his supporters never took advantage of it. Butler did, to be sure, state that he was restricting his campaign to local rather than national issues--which would preclude discussions of immigration--but his comments on Hayes, greenbacks, and a new homestead law clearly refute this. As an added note, Butler campaigned in North Adams, the town to which Chinese laborers had been imported eight years earlier and where many Chinese still worked. More amazing still, Butler's running mate for lieutenant governor came from North Adams. These golden opportunities for anti-Chinese propaganda, were left unexploited.⁶⁰

And what of Kearney? He was down but not out. After such embarrassing confrontations in early October, he curtailed his schedule. Instead of conducting rallies every day as he had been, he spoke only twice a week for the next month. His absence hardly made people grow more fond of

him. Although he did attract several thousand listeners in Fall River for one speech in late October, Kearney had for the most part simply become, in the words of the New York World, "too dismal to attract audiences." His speeches in October and early November did, however, reveal a slight but significant change in content: Kearney no longer attacked the Chinese. After his speech in Brookline on October 2, Chinese immigration disappeared from his repertoire. "The Chinese must go" would not rouse crowds in Massachusetts and would no longer be Kearney's attempted rallying cry in the East. Butler's men had probably convinced him to drop the subject, or, less likely, Kearney had decided to on his own. One fact, however, is clear: Butler's men tried to restrict Kearney to Boston. When Kearney ventured west he encountered trouble. He planned to speak in Springfield in late October, but "Butler men ... gave him the cold shoulder." No one met him at the station and no one arranged for an audience. "Dennis," the Springfield Republican concluded, "seems to have been pretty thoroughly frozen out here." He left town as quickly as he had arrived. The Globe, significantly, did not mention the incident.⁶¹

The campaign received national coverage and was by far the most publicized state campaign in the nation. Republicans, cringing at the prospect of a Butler victory, brought out their biggest guns to defeat him. James Blaine,

James Garfield, Carl Schurz, and other prominent out-of-state Congressmen and Cabinet members visited Massachusetts to campaign against him. Hostile newspapers--meaning almost all of them--accused Butler of embracing "Kearneyism." [See figure 7.8] They claimed he had brought Kearney east expressly for the campaign and paid his expenses. Butler vehemently denied such charges, but in late October the Boston Herald reported that a Lowell bank had processed a check from Butler to Kearney for \$1,000. The connection proved spurious--the check was to a William, not a Denis, Kearney--but this revelation did little to distance the two in the eyes of the public or to reconcile them in private. Kearney began receiving his mail at the offices of the Boston Herald, one of the newspapers he had publicly denounced to hearty groans two months before, and the Herald, in turn, started printing editorials sympathetic to him. Butler, fed up at last, finally began to criticize Kearney in the last week of the campaign. Kearney, for his part, still championed Butler. His final speeches in the two days before the election became increasingly virulent. Butler, he claimed, could only lose by "fraud and intimidation," and he threatened to "take the life of any man" who interfered with the balloting. "If our candidate is defeated," he proclaimed, "we Workingmen ... shall then unfurl the red flag of revolution, kill and destroy millions of capital and free the people from tyranny...." Even the

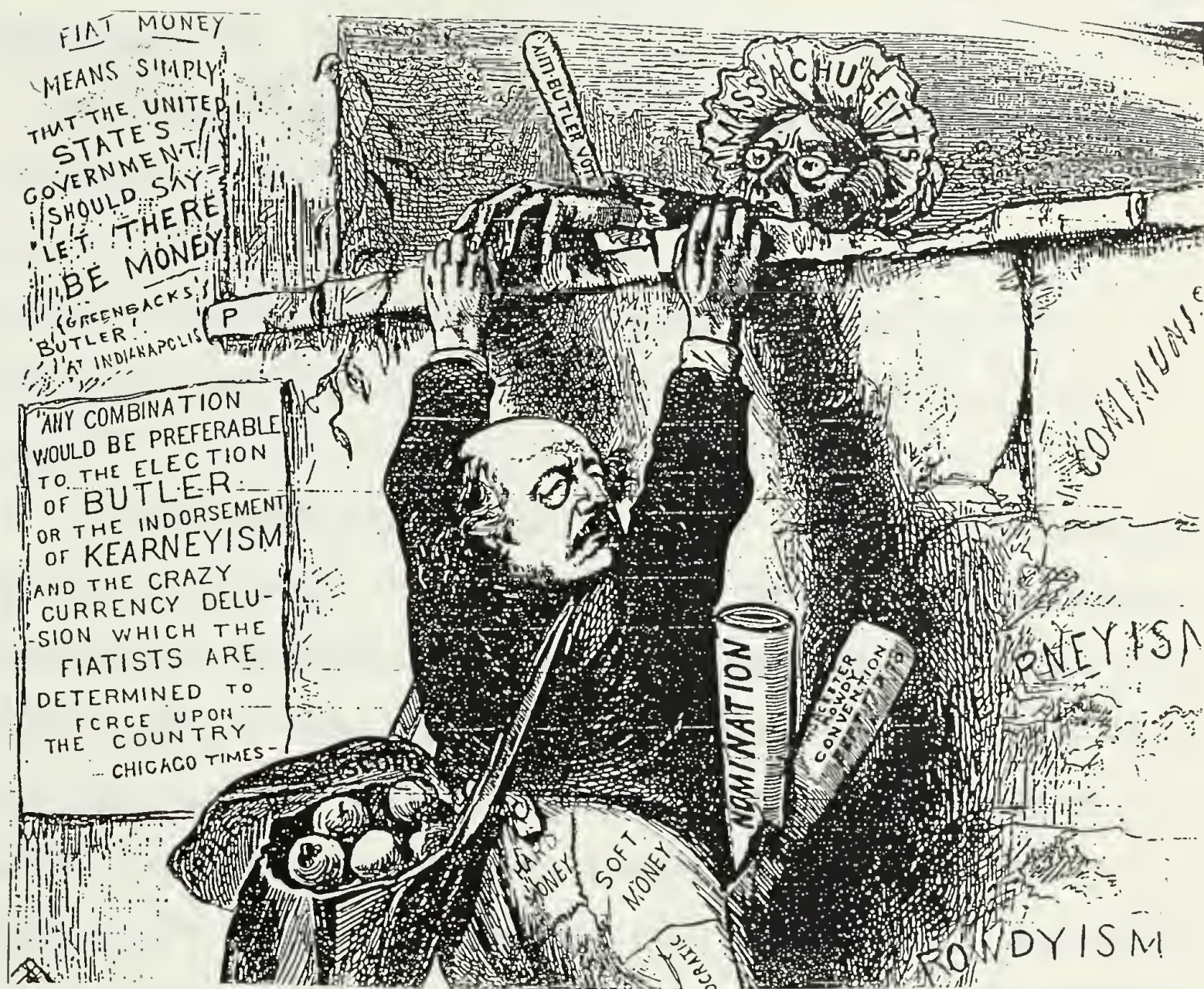


Figure 7.8. Carrying "apples of discord," Butler scales a wall built with blocks of "Kearneyism" and "communism" in his quest for the governorship. Note the image of Massachusetts as a prim, puritan schoolmarm.

Source: Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper, October 5, 1878.

pro-Kearney San Francisco Chronicle called this speech "very incendiary."⁶²

The publicity and excitement produced a heavy turnout on election day. Butler lost by only 25,000 votes. He polled 109,435 votes to the Republican's 134,725. (The regular Democrat polled just 10,162.) Butler had done remarkably well for a third party candidate. Still, he lost.⁶³

Butler and Kearney spent the next month trading charges and countercharges. Butler said that Kearney's "intemperate utterances" as reported in the press may well have cost him the election. "His speeches," Butler said, "... did me more harm than good." Kearney disagreed and blamed Butler's defeat on "'the low political bummers who managed the campaign.'" Butler was no more than a politician, he added, and the working classes did not consider him a real friend. "'When I found this feeling so prevalent among the more intelligent of the workingmen,'" Kearney said in a mid-November interview, "'I knew his defeat was certain.'" Carl Browne, Kearney's private secretary, asserted that Kearney, angry at Butler's unsupportiveness during the campaign, had deliberately made vituperative speeches toward the end of the canvass to damage Butler's chances. Butler reached the same conclusion and hinted that Kearney may have been paid off. Kearney denied this and called Browne a liar. But he did not disguise his growing hatred for the ungrateful

Greenbacker. "The next time that Butler ran for Governor of Massachusetts," Kearney told his San Francisco supporters a few weeks later, "he would go back there and bury him so deep that he would never again show his head upon the political arena."⁶⁴

The election itself did not spell Kearney's final demise. He brought that upon himself a week later when he tried to manipulate the nominations of the Workingmen's Party in the upcoming Boston municipal election. The Workingmen's Party held a convention on November 12 and Kearney attended. He had claimed a month earlier that workers had pleaded with him to stay in Boston through December to help elect a Workingman mayor. Delegates at the convention were not so eager. The convention, in fact, was divided over whether to nominate Frederick Prince, a popular former mayor and pro-Butler Democrat. When Kearney spoke against Prince, the assembly showered him with boos and hisses. "Several delegates went so far as to shake their fists in Kearney's face, inquiring why he should come here meddling with the politics of the city." Kearney tried to continue speaking but, the Boston Globe reported, "[t]he audience ... was in no mood for listening," Then someone "turned the gas off in his face," thereby darkening the room. Considerable chaos followed and Kearney was at last "compelled to keep silent." During this "scene of confusion," the Globe continued, the chairman and secretary

of the meeting left the hall while "a portion of the audience crowded on to the platform, some blaming Kearney and others offering advice to the sand-lot orator to keep out of this business altogether." The meeting quickly dissolved but not without further attacks on Kearney. "The workingmen denounced him," the New York World noted, and told him "that he was not a true representative of labor." They refused to "be dictated to by him," and asked him to leave. Kearney, the World concluded, "departed completely discomfited."⁶⁵

The Workingmen met again the next night to take care of unfinished business. Kearney did not attend but was nonetheless the object of discussion. T.P. Splaine, a newly elected legislator, spoke on "the rights of the workingmen" and the coming election. He "deprecated the disgraceful proceedings of the [last night's] meeting and was particularly severe on Dennis Kearney, whom he considered as the principal cause of discord." The audience apparently agreed. "The hall was crowded," the New York Herald noted, "and much feeling was manifested against Dennis Kearney." Another speaker, a Mr. Wilby, referred to him "as the pretended workingman's friend, and if he had been a hireling of the republicans to throw apples of discord into the ranks of the workingman, he could not have done his work better." The speaker concluded: "Let him go back to California. The workingmen here repudiate him."⁶⁶

Kearney heeded the advice. Claiming he was needed by the working classes in San Francisco, Kearney announced he would soon leave Massachusetts. He promised to give one last "farewell speech" to his supporters. On November 17, he spoke to a crowd of two thousand in Independence Square in Boston. He denounced the Democrats, he denounced the Republicans, and he denounced those who had denounced him. The speech differed little from those he had made in the past month and a half. He did not mention the Chinese. The crowd seemed little interested in what he had to say, and the Boston Globe, so long his champion and cheerleader, did not dispute the fact. "During the speech," the Globe reported, "which occupied about an hour, the large crowd ... were exceedingly quiet, and only a few interruptions were made. No enthusiasm was evinced and the whole speech fell flat.... At the close the large crowd quickly dispersed." Kearney left for San Francisco two days later. His four-month tour was over.⁶⁷

From the abuse heaped on Kearney by the mainstream press during the summer, one would have expected smug editorials of satisfaction upon his ignominious departure in the fall. In a sense vindicated by the thorough rejection of Kearney by everyone, editorialists could have congratulated themselves for predicting his downfall. This, however, was not the case. Few newspapers noted his

leaving. In fact, readers would have been hard-pressed to know that Kearney was still in the East in October and November. After receiving an avalanche of publicity in the opening weeks of his tour, "the Great Agitator" practically dropped out of view in mid-September. Kearney, wrote a correspondent to the Pittsfield Sun, was little more than "a seven day sensation" who "passes out of memory as he goes out of sight." After his tour of the Midwest, journalists no longer considered him newsworthy. "Poor Kearney!" rhapsodized the Philadelphia Times in late September. "But a brief fortnight ago he was made bright and glorious by display heads in big type leading column-long articles--and now he is stuck away in odd corners in three-line agate type." Newspapers that had delighted in ridiculing him, such as the New York Herald and Tribune, virtually stopped mentioning him in October. One has to painstakingly comb the back pages of the daily papers to find the slightest reference to his whereabouts. Even the Boston Globe tucked away reports on Kearney's speeches and disposed of them in brief paragraphs and single sentences. The Irish World stopped mentioning him for several weeks. While Butler's campaign for governor received nationwide publicity--and was branded with "Kearneyism"--Kearney, himself, received scant notice. He had appeared in July like a brightly-lit "'tail of a comet,'" in socialist George Schilling's words, and burned himself out just as quickly. Or, as the New York

World suggested, having "risen like a rocket in the West ... he falls like a stick in the East." No longer attracting crowds he no longer attracted headlines. As far as the public knew he had disappeared.⁶⁸

Kearney's near-banishment from the newspapers divided his trip neatly into two parts: the first eight weeks heralding his advent and describing his rallies, and the last eight weeks slighting his speeches and ignoring his downfall. This shift in coverage had significant consequences. Readers east of the Rocky Mountains received a full dosage of Kearney's diatribes, the often tumultuous crowds that greeted him, and the enthusiastic approvals of his resolutions; they received scarcely any hint of his decline, his humiliation in early October, and his repudiation by the Workingmen's Party in November. In addition, the cross-class composition of the crowds received only the briefest of notices--seldom more than a sentence or two--while Kearney's violent class-based rhetoric dominated the reports. Objections to Kearney and his anti-Chinese epithets by individual workers and the socialist press were no more than whispers next to the "thunders of applause" early crowds gave him.⁶⁹ Thus the message most readers got differed markedly from the reactions many workers felt. While working-class opinion revealed deep divisions and ultimately rejection of Kearney, the media-created perception of working-class opinion showed general approval.

The image of cheering working-class crowds was implanted in people's minds far more saliently than well-dressed spectators, egg-throwing listeners, or disgusted workers. This distinction would have serious repercussions in the months to come.

Kearney was not the only show in town in the summer and fall of 1878. Workers had another forum far removed from the noisy streets and open-air meetings in which to express their grievances before the public. In June the United States House of Representatives had appointed a special committee to investigate the causes of the industrial depression in which the country had been mired for the past five years. The committee, chaired by Abram Hewitt, Democratic Representative of New York, held open sessions in Manhattan, Scranton, and Washington, D.C. It also received letters from throughout the country. The Hewitt Committee, as it was popularly called, heard testimony from over seventy witnesses who gave their opinions on labor, business, and the economic system, and suggested remedies that the federal government could implement. These witnesses covered the entire political spectrum, from self-proclaimed communists, socialists, and labor reformers to merchants, manufacturers, capitalists, and such staunch laissez-faire conservatives as William Graham Sumner and David A. Wells. Numerous workers and union leaders testified as well. The cast included a printer, plumber,

cooper, and tailor, along with cigar-makers, stone-cutters, a piano maker, and one "colored waiter." One woman representing the "Congress of Humanity" testified also. The Hewitt Committee thus offered a unique opportunity for laborers and their spokesmen to directly inform Congress (and the public) of their complaints, their needs, and their demands for new legislation. Here they could tell their representatives in the federal government exactly what they wanted. A better, more official forum could hardly be imagined.⁷⁰

In all the days and hours of testimony, Chinese immigration surfaced just a half dozen times. Only two witnesses favored Chinese exclusion. One of these was Charles Wyllis Elliott, a Nebraska cattle-raiser and former Boston manufacturer. When asked by Hewitt if he favored prohibiting Chinese immigration, Elliott responded, "I should restrain it. I should restrain all immigration. When we have already got a surplus of labor ... we had better not encourage further immigration."⁷¹ The other exclusionist was Isaac Cohen, an odd character of whom little is known. A machinist by trade, he came to Washington, D.C. in the mid-1870s for the purpose, according to one member of the National Workingmen's Assembly, of "selling patent medicines with a quack doctor." Unable to make a living, he decided to enter the labor movement and began making "street-corner harangues." His violent

language--not unlike Kearney's--attracted crowds, and on at least one occasion landed him in jail on the charge of incitement to riot. Indeed, one newspaper called him "Kearney, Junior." He claimed leadership of the "Workingmen's Relief Association" and was one of the few "labor leaders" to welcome Kearney to Washington in August. The National Workingmen's Assembly wanted nothing to do with Cohen. When he applied for membership in the summer, workers called him a "fraud" and "political trickster." Despite this rejection, Cohen gained an audience with the Hewitt Committee as a representative of labor. He spoke long and clearly on the "evils" of Chinese labor and favored their total exclusion: "in the language of Dennis Kearney," he said, "'They ought to go.'" Upon further questioning, Cohen broadened his views to include other groups if deemed "detrimental to the community." When asked if he would agree to exclude "Germans, or Irish, or Italians, or negroes" if Americans considered them a danger, he responded: "I suppose I will have to do so to be consistent."⁷²

Charles Wyllis Elliott, ex-manufacturer/cattle-raiser, and Isaac Cohen, repudiated self-appointed labor leader, hardly qualify as the voice of the working classes. The only other two witnesses to mention Chinese immigration come a little closer: Adolph Douai and Adolph Strasser. Douai, editor of the Arbeiter-Union and member of the Socialistic

Labor Party, had been one of the many speakers at the 1870 rally in Tompkins Square Park to denounce imported contract labor but welcome Chinese immigrants. Eight years later his views hadn't changed. Near the end of his testimony on August 2, 1878, Representative Thomas A. Boyd [D-IL] asked him outright if he favored the restriction of Chinese immigration:

DOUAI: We would not restrict anyone. We would have education make every one understand his standing in society, that he is to live for the benefit of all, and that society is to live for the benefit of everybody. Let us first get rid of this unchristian state of society. We demand that Chinese emigration under contract ought to be stopped immediately. [Emphasis mine.]

HEWITT: Not otherwise?

DOUAI: Not otherwise.⁷³

Adolph Strasser, less a visionary and radical than Douai, was chief organizer and president of the Cigar Makers' International Union. With his key advisor, Samuel Gompers, he had led New York City cigar makers through the long strike against tenement-house labor the previous fall and winter. With the possible exception of shoemaking, the cigar industry was the trade most threatened by Chinese laborers: in California Chinese cigar makers had made sharp inroads in the work force. No one knew this better than Strasser. As head of a large, tightly-knit organization, Strasser was one of the few bona fide union leaders to discuss Chinese immigration in the summer of 1878. He testified before the Hewitt Committee on August 5, the exact

same day that Kearney spoke in Faneuil Hall in Boston.

Strasser's message, however, was quite different.

He opened with a lengthy statement filled with facts, charts, and statistics. He described the cigar industry in detail, concentrating on the tenement-house system by which employers overworked and underpaid their employees.

Strasser mentioned the Chinese just once as little more than an afterthought. Hewitt, however, picked up on this.

"Would you," the New York Congressman asked point-blank, "prohibit coolies from being employed in the manufacture of cigars?" Strasser replied:

I am not opposed to the Chinaman, or any nationality; but I am opposed that John Chinaman or any one else should be imported here as a coolie under contract. I don't agree that the Chinaman must go. I cannot agree with that, because you might as well say that some one else must go. That is wrong; I cannot agree to that. I am not in favor of that; but I am in favor not to tolerate the direct importation of coolies by contract.⁷⁴

Under intensive questioning by Hewitt on contract labor, European artisans, and Chinese immigrants, Strasser stuck to his guns:

HEWITT: Suppose a silk merchant wanted to get people [from France] to work in his factory, would you oppose his employing them under a contract for five years?

STRASSER: I would.

HEWITT: You think he should not be allowed to introduce skilled operatives into this country?

STRASSER: No, I am in favor of that, but opposed to their being brought here as slaves....

HEWITT: Would you make a law in regard to contracts made in China between Chinese?

STRASSER: I don't suppose our jurisdiction goes over to China; I suppose the question is superfluous.

HEWITT: You say you would not tolerate such contracts; but the contracts are made in China?

STRASSER: I am only opposed to bringing them here under contract.

HEWITT: You would not allow Chinamen to be brought here under contract?

STRASSER: Yes, sir.

HEWITT: Would you object to Frenchmen being brought here under contract to introduce the silk business?

STRASSER: Yes, sir.

HEWITT: You won't allow any one to be brought here under contract?

STRASSER: I am opposed to it.

The key distinction in Strasser's mind was method of immigration, not nationality. Hewitt continued hammering away at Strasser, the New York Congressman seemingly trying to trap him in some compromising statement. Becoming exasperated, Hewitt finally asked him what limits he wanted placed on the employment of foreigners in the United States. The cigar maker responded: "I am not proposing any limits. I don't care if 500 Chinamen came to this country on their own hook. I don't oppose them or anyone else...."⁷⁵

Excerpts of Strasser's testimony appeared in the Cigar Makers' Official Journal, the trade's monthly newspaper. "I am not opposed to any nationality or race nor to John Chinaman," the president's words rang out, "provided they come as free laborers under no contract." Cigar makers responded favorably to their leader's statements. "Your interview with the Hewitt Congressional Committee meets with general approval among the craft," wrote the journal's correspondent from Detroit. Cigar makers in Boston were similarly pleased. "We agree individually," the

Massachusetts correspondent reported, "in approving the remarks of the International President before the Congressional Committee." The Hewitt Committee itself commended the cigar maker. "So clear was the statement of Mr. Strasser," one newspaper noted, "that the Committee thanked him for the manner in which he had presented it."⁷⁶

Despite these words of support, most everyone else criticized the Hewitt Committee as a waste of time. Editors of mainstream newspapers lauded the sensible and conservative sentiments of Sumner, Wells, and their cohorts, but demeaned the rest as "Flannel-Mouths and Loafers," "crazy idealists," and "crack-brained idiots." The New York Tribune called them "Hewitt's Lunatics."⁷⁷ For once, Denis Kearney agreed. He condemned the testifiers as "simpletons ... more fit to be in a lunatic asylum than representing labor."⁷⁸ The Irish World backed him up, noting that the witnesses displayed "a very meagre knowledge of the Labor question." And the Socialistic Labor Party in New York, despite the fact that several of its members had testified, denounced the committee as a sham. Only the New York Dispatch, which dismissed the bulk of the hearings as offering "very little that is of the slightest importance," made a point of singling out Strasser for special commendation. "In the other trades there are men as painstaking and sensible as Mr. Strasser," the Dispatch

editorialized, "and to these the Congressional Committee should give its time.... The real workingmen have discussed the things which affect their trades, and they are likely to have special knowledge of the way in which their trades can be benefitted by changing certain laws." Such reactions were unusual. While most newspapers printed excerpts of the testimony, several misquoted Strasser and Douai and ignored their comments on Chinese immigration altogether. Their words, and those of their fellow workers, simply drifted away into history.⁷⁹

During the summer of 1878, Adolph Strasser spoke clearly and forcefully on his attitudes toward Chinese immigration. So did Adolph Douai, Peter J. McGuire, John E. Cope, and B.E.G. Jewett. So also did an anonymous foundry worker from St. Louis, "O'Brien" from Port Huron, Michigan, and countless other laborers whose voices can be rescued from the hidden corners of the past. But these workers and labor leaders received few headlines in the summer and autumn of 1878. Their voices were drowned out by the roaring rhetoric of Denis Kearney and the inflated attention he received. An electrifying speaker and pulsating audience were, after all, more thrilling to report and to read about than dry testimony before Congress and assorted interviews and letters-to-the-editor. And thrilling articles boost sales.

Denis Kearney fits into a long American tradition of charismatic orators who blended a vibrant populism with vicious racism. Like Mike Walsh in the 1840s and Tom Watson after the turn of the century, Denis Kearney gained notoriety by spouting radical, class-conscious, anti-capitalist, and racist rhetoric. Although Kearney would soon disappear from public view and die in obscurity in 1907, his meteoric career would have effects at least as great as those of Walsh or Watson. The "shouting drayman" left a trail that would keep shining long after his demise. Few were aware of this in the fall of 1878, however, when Kearney left Boston "a laughing stock." Interviewed in late November, Senator Aaron Sargent of California, the leading anti-Chinese spokesman in Congress, called Kearney's trip east "a complete failure." In some respects, Sargent was right, as people of all persuasions repudiated the "Howling Hoodlum." But in one critical respect, Kearney was a blazing success. He showed that a forceful speaker could stir a crowd to its feet in the East by mouthing virulent, racist, anti-Chinese rhetoric. No matter that the crowd was composed of many classes and segments of society. No matter that people came to laugh and to shout. No matter that numerous workers and labor leaders had renounced Kearney and his anti-Chinese sentiments. To people trying to gauge public opinion, the spontaneous agitation of the "rabble" carried more weight than all the scattered voices from the

working-class community that rose up in protest to Kearney's message. The divergence between public opinion and perceptions of public opinion would have tragic consequences in the years to come. It would lead to the exclusion of an entire race of people from the United States; it would also lead to the pillorying and blaming of one class of society as the culprit for this exclusion, a class that was in reality deeply divided over the issue.⁸⁰

How did this transformation occur? Politicians are one group of society especially interested in public opinion. Their power and their jobs, in effect, depend on it. One politician particularly concerned with public opinion toward the end of 1878 was James G. Blaine, senator from Maine and a leading contender for the presidential nomination in 1880. A former Radical Republican and staunch defender of civil rights and black suffrage, Blaine had never yet made a comment publicly on Chinese immigration.⁸¹ One might have expected him to defend the Chinese, as he had defended blacks, as human beings entitled to equal rights and political privileges. Indeed it was Blaine who had dismissed Kearney in September as "'an unduly inflated sack of very bad gas.'" But that summer and autumn the Maine Senator read the newspapers and recognized the appeal that Chinese exclusion seemed to have among the working classes. Disregarding, or probably not noticing, the diversity of

working-class opinion, Blaine seized on the issue with a sudden fervor.

In December, Senator Blaine attended a dinner party in Washington, D.C. with several Southern Democrats and Northern Republicans. For the first time, the San Francisco Chronicle reported, Blaine "took strong and decided grounds against Chinese immigration. 'A people who eat beef and bread,'" the Maine senator quipped, "'and who drink beer cannot labor alongside of those who live on rice, and if the experiment is attempted on a large scale the American laborer will have to drop his knife and fork and take up the chop-sticks.'" Blaine's language was not as vulgar as Kearney's but it would be soon. His conversion would prove a significant factor in the exclusion of Chinese immigrants from the United States. Others were converting as well. As the reporter for the San Francisco Chronicle noted triumphantly in December 1878, "The Chinese question has of late excited a great deal more interest among public men at the Capital than it has ever before been possible to arouse."⁸² Kearney's message had gotten through to the most unexpected of listeners.

NOTES

1. The Nation, Aug. 1, 1878, p. 62.

2. Biographical information of Kearney, although sketchy, was gleaned from the Boston Globe, July 28, 1878, p. 1, Aug. 9 1878, p. 2; New York Herald, July 28, 1878, p. 7; Henry George, "The Kearney Agitation in California," Popular Science Monthly, XVII (August 1880), pp. 433-53; Doyce B. Nunis, Jr., ed., "The Demagogue and the Demographer: Correspondence of Denis Kearney and Lord Bryce," Pacific Historical Review, 36 (1967), pp. 269-88; and Dictionary of American Biography, V (New York, 1961), pp. 268-69.

3. Boston Globe, July 28, 1878, p. 1; James Bryce, The American Commonwealth, II (New York: Macmillan, 1905, 3rd ed.), p. 431; Denis Kearney to Lord James Bryce, Nov. 14, 1889, in Nunis, "The Demagogue and the Demographer: Correspondence of Denis Kearney and Lord Bryce," pp. 280, 281; Neal Larry Shumsky, untitled chapter on the Workingmen's Party of California, in possession of the author. Shumsky argues persuasively that Kearney and the Workingmen's Party were in the tradition of the pre-industrial crowd.

4. Boston Journal, July 25, 1878, p. 1; New York Times, Aug. 6, 1878, p. 1; Boston Globe, Aug. 6, 1878, p. 1, Aug. 9, 1878, p. 2, Aug. 11, 1878, p. 1; New York Sun, Aug. 9, 1878, p. 1, Aug. 13, 1878, p. 3.

5. "C.C." in New York Tribune, Aug. 7, 1878, p. 5; New York Herald, Aug. 21, 1878, p. 5; Boston Globe, Aug. 9, 1878, p. 2, Aug. 6, 1878, p. 1; New York Sun, Aug. 6, 1878, p. 1; New York Tribune, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 1; Chicago Times, Aug. 20, 1878, p. 3; Tony Hart interviewed in St. Louis Globe-Democrat, reprinted in Cincinnati Gazette, Aug. 15, 1878, p. 7.

6. This is a composite drawn from slightly different versions in the New York Sun, Aug. 6, 1878, p. 1; Boston Globe, Aug. 6, 1878, p. 1; Irish World, Aug. 17, 1878, p. 5.

7. New York Sun, Aug. 11, 1878, p. 5, Aug. 13, 1878, p. 3, Aug. 6, 1878, p. 1; New York Tribune, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 2; Cincinnati Gazette, Aug. 24, 1878, p. 4.

8. New York Herald, Aug. 24, 1878, p. 5; Boston Globe, Aug. 9, 1878, p. 2, Aug. 11, 1878, p. 1; New York Tribune, Sept. 3, 1878, p. 1, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 2; San Francisco Chronicle, Sept. 18, 1878, p. 3.

9. Boston Globe, Aug. 11, 1878, p. 1; New York Tribune, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 2; Cincinnati Gazette, Aug. 24, 1878, p. 4.
10. Boston Globe, Aug. 9, 1878, p. 2; Cincinnati Gazette, Aug. 24, 1878, p. 4; San Francisco Chronicle, Oct. 28, 1878, p. 3; New York Tribune, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 2,
11. Cincinnati Gazette, Aug. 24, 1878, p. 4; Boston Globe, Aug. 9, 1878, p. 2; New York Sun, Aug. 13, 1878, p. 3, Aug. 6, 1878, p. 1, Aug. 9, 1878, p. 1.
12. Denis Kearney, "To the Workingmen of Massachusetts," Sept. 21, 1878, in Boston Globe, Oct. 1, 1878, p. 3; ibid., Aug. 24, 1878, p. 1; Cincinnati Gazette, Aug. 24, 1878, p. 4; Boston Pilot, Aug. 17, 1878, p. 8.
13. Boston Globe, Aug. 11, 1878, p. 1; Irish World, Aug. 17, 1878, p. 5; Washington Post, Aug. 30, 1878, p. 2; conference reported in San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 26, 1878, p. 3; Boston Pilot, Aug. 17, 1878, p. 4; "An Irish Workman" (letter) in Boston Pilot, Aug. 24, 1878, p. 5; New York Sun, Aug. 6, 1878, p. 1.
14. For more on Butler, see Hans L. Trefousse, Ben Butler: The South Called Him BEAST! (New York: Twayne, 1957). See also David Montgomery, Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans, 1862-1872 (New York: Knopf, 1967), p. 360 ff.
15. Butler coming to visit him, Kearney later quipped, was "like the Mountain coming to Mahomet." Irish World, Aug. 17, 1878, p. 5; Boston Globe, Aug. 15, 1878, p. 2; Dec. 10, 1878. For other examples of crowds cheering Butler, see Boston Globe, Aug. 6, 1878, p. 1; New York Sun, Aug. 9, 1878, p. 1, Aug. 13, 1878, p. 1; New York Tribune, Sept. 7, 1878, pp. 1-2.
16. Kearney interviewed in Boston Herald, July 29, 1878, reprinted in New York Herald, July 30, 1878, p. 5; Boston Pilot, Aug. 17, 1878, p. 8; Boston Globe, Aug. 9, 1878, p. 2, Aug. 15, 1878, p. 1, Aug. 31, 1878, p. 1; New York Tribune, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 2; Boston Transcript, Aug. 13, 1878, p. 1, Aug. 15, 1878, p. 1; San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 22, 1878, p. 3, Aug. 23, 1878, p. 3, Aug. 25, 1878, p. 8; Philadelphia Public Ledger, Aug. 31, 1878, p. 1; New York Herald, Sept. 2, 1878, p. 4.
17. San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 24, 1878, p. 3; Boston Globe, Aug. 9, 1878, p. 2, Aug. 14, 1878, p. 1; New York Sun, Aug. 11, 1878, p. 5, Sept. 4, 1878, p. 1; New York Tribune, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 2.

18. Boston Transcript, Aug. 9, 1878, p. 4, Aug. 6, 1878, p. 4; Philadelphia Inquirer, Aug. 29, 1878, p. 4, Aug. 31, 1878, p. 4; Chicago Times, Aug. 21, 1878, p. 3; New York Tribune, Aug. 7, 1878, p. 4, Sept. 5, 1878, p. 4, July 30, 1878, p. 4, Aug. 5, 1878, p. 4, Oct. 11, 1878, p. 4; New York Times, Aug. 30, 1878, p. 4, Aug. 29, 1878, p. 4, Aug. 13, 1878, p. 4, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 2; The Nation, Aug. 1, 1878, p. 62; Cincinnati Gazette, Aug. 20, 1878, p. 4; St. Louis Post, Aug. 23, 1878, p. 4; "Templeton" (correspondent, Boston, Aug. 8) in Hartford Courant, Aug. 10, 1878, p. 1; Harper's Weekly, Sept. 28, 1878, p. 766; Pottsville Miner's Journal, Aug. 9, 1878, p. 2; New York World, Sept. 8, 1878, p. 2, Sept. 6, 1878, p. 4; New York Sun, Aug. 6, 1878, p. 2; Boston Pilot, Aug. 17, 1878, p. 4; New York Irish-American, Sept. 14, 1878, p. 4. The extent of anti-Kearney editorials is near endless. See also Boston Journal, Aug. 3, 1878, p. 1; New York Herald, Aug. 9, 1878, p. 5, Aug. 17, 1878, p. 4; New York Express, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 2; Springfield Republican, Sept. 28, 1878, p. 4.

19. New York Labor Standard, Aug. 11, 1878, p. 1; Irish World, Sept. 14, 1878, p. 4.

20. Blaine quoted in interview in Chicago Times, reprinted in Hartford Courant, Sept. 5, 1878, p. 2. For examples of anti-Kearney sermons, see Rev. A. Vincent Group, "America's Fatal King: Kearney's Communism," in Philadelphia Inquirer, Sept. 2, 1878, p. 3; Rev. W.C. Steele in New York Herald, Sept. 11, 1878, p. 5.

21. New York Herald, Sept. 11, 1878, p. 5.

22. Boston Globe, July 28, 1878, p. 1, Aug. 18, 1878, pp. 2, 4; Irish World, Feb. 9, 1878, p. 4, May 18, 1878, p. 5, Sept. 14, 1878, p. 4; Uriah S. Stephens to Terence V. Powderly, Aug. 3, 1878, Powderly Papers, Catholic University; Chicago Tribune, Aug. 19, 1878; Cincinnati Gazette, Aug. 19, 1878, p. 6; New York Sun, Sept. 3, 1878, p. 1; New York Tribune, Sept. 7, 1878, pp. 1-2.

23. New York Herald, Sept. 2, 1878, p. 4; New York Sun, Sept. 3, 1878, p. 1, Aug. 13, 1878, p. 3; New York Tribune, Sept. 3, 1878, p. 1, Sept. 4, 1878, p. 1; Boston Globe, Aug. 11, 1878, p. 1.

24. Boston Globe, Aug. 9, 1878, p. 1; New York Herald, Aug. 9, 1878, p. 5; Boston Transcript, Aug. 9, 1878, p. 1; New York Sun, Aug. 9, 1878, p. 1.

25. New York Tribune, Aug. 7, 1878, p. 5; New York Sun,

Aug. 6, 1878, p. 1; Boston Globe, Aug. 6, 1878, p. 1; Irish World, Aug. 17, 1878, p. 5.

26. Boston Transcript, Nov. 4, 1878, p. 2; San Francisco Chronicle, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 3; Irish World, Sept. 14, 1878, p. 1; New York Herald, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 3; New York Sun, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 1; New York Tribune, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 1; New York Post, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 1; New York Times, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 2; New York World, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 1.

27. New York Times, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 2; New York Post, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 1; Irish World, Sept. 14, 1878, p. 1; New York Sun, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 1; New York Tribune, Sept. 7, 1878, pp. 1, 2; New York Graphic, Sept. 9, 1878, p. 479.

28. Indianapolis Sun, Aug. 19, 1878, p. 4; New York Herald, Aug. 21, 1878, p. 5; Mrs. E.N. Lusk (letter, Chicago) in National Socialist, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 2; Boston Journal, Aug. 30, 1878, p. 2; New York Sun, Aug. 30, 1878, p. 1; San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 29, 1878, p. 3, Sept. 8, 1878, p. 3; San Francisco Alta California, Aug. 30, 1878, p. 1; Brooklyn Eagle, Sept. 8, 1878, p. 4. On the crowd in Washington, see also New York Herald, Aug. 30, 1878, p. 5, which stressed, "Government clerks, workingmen and idlers about town"; Washington Star, Aug. 30, 1878, p. 4.

29. "R." (letter, Boston, Aug. 12) in Portland Eastern Argus, Aug. 14, 1878, p. 4; New York Sun, Sept. 3, 1878, p. 1, Aug. 13, 1878, p. 3; Chicago Times, Aug. 20, 1878, p. 3; San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 30, 1878, p. 3; "Scott" (letter, Boston, Aug. 3) in Portland Eastern Argus, Aug. 12, 1878, p. 1; George, "The Kearney Agitation in California," p. 452; Philadelphia Inquirer, Aug. 31, 1878, p. 4.

30. Brooklyn Eagle, Sept. 8, 1878, p. 4; Cincinnati Enquirer, Aug. 25, 1878, p. 4; Cincinnati Gazette, Aug. 19, 1878, p. 6; St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Aug. 22, 1878, p. 1; New York Herald, Aug. 21, p. 5, Aug. 31, 1878, p. 5; Philadelphia Inquirer, Aug. 30, 1878, p. 3, Sept. 13, 1878, p. 4. See also Boston Globe, Aug. 6, 1878, p. 1; Boston Journal, Aug. 13, 1878, p. 3; Washington Star, Aug. 30, 1878, p. 4. The New York Herald, Sept. 4, 1878, p. 10, dismissed one crowd as nothing more than "sight seers."

31. Philadelphia Inquirer, Sept. 13, 1878, p. 4; "R." (letter, Boston, Aug. 12) in Portland Eastern Argus, Aug. 14, 1878, p. 4; San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 19, 1878, p. 3; Chicago Times, Aug. 21, 1878, p. 3; Boston Transcript, Aug. 9, 1878, p. 1. In Lynn, for example, the band played "national airs and medleys." (New York Sun, Aug. 13, 1878, p. 3.)

32. New York Sun, Aug. 13, 1878, p. 3; Boston Globe, Aug. 9, 1878, pp. 1, 2; New York Herald, Aug. 31, 1878, p. 5; "C.C." in New York Tribune, Aug. 7, 1878, p. 5; Boston Transcript, Aug. 9, 1878, p. 1; New York World, Sept. 8, 1878, p. 2. For examples of hecklers, see San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 18, 1878, p. 8, Sept. 3, 1878, p. 3; New York Tribune, Sept. 7, 1878, pp. 1-2.

33. New York Tribune, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 2.

34. Boston Journal, Aug. 13, 1878, p. 3; Washington Post, Aug. 30, 1878, p. 2; San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 31, 1878, p. 3. For a slightly different wording of the Philadelphia resolution, see Philadelphia Public Ledger, Aug. 31, 1878, p. 1.

35. San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 22, 1878, p. 3; Chicago Inter-Ocean quoted in San Francisco Alta California, Aug. 22, 1878, p. 1; New York Herald, Aug. 22, 1878, p. 4; Philadelphia Inquirer, Aug. 31, 1878, p. 2; Chicago Tribune, Aug. 19, 1878; Cincinnati Gazette, Aug. 19, 1878, p. 6; Cincinnati Enquirer, Aug. 24, 1878, p. 8; "C.C." in New York Tribune, Aug. 7, 1878, p. 5; New York Herald, Aug. 21, 1878, p. 7; New York Sun, Aug. 6, 1878, p. 1. The poem is from Chicago News, Aug. 21, 1878, p. 2.

36. New York Tribune, Aug. 30, 1878, p. 5; Philadelphia Inquirer, Aug. 30, 1878, p. 3.

37. Philadelphia Inquirer, Aug. 30, 1878, p. 3; New York Times, Sept. 4, 1878, p. 1. This may well have been the same Samuel Mason who defended Chinese immigration five years earlier in the Workingman's Advocate, Feb. 8, 1873, p. 2. (See chapter 4.)

38. Boston Transcript, Oct. 1, 1878, p. 1; Washington Star, Aug. 30, 1878, pp. 1, 4; New York Tribune, Sept. 5, 1878, p. 4.

39. Indianapolis Sun, Aug. 19, 1878, p. 2, Aug. 30, 1878, p. 2, Nov. 11, 1878, p. 2; Pomeroy's Illustrated Democrat, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 2. The Oshkosh (Wisc.) Greenback Standard printed two brief paragraphs on Kearney's speech in Faneuil Hall, but then he all but disappeared from its columns. (Oshkosh Greenback-Standard, Aug. 9, 1878, p. 1.) The Anti-Monopolist gave a few sentences to Kearney on Sept. 5, 1878 (pp. 1, 5), but scarcely mentioned him elsewhere. The Brookville Jefferson County Graphic, a Pennsylvania Greenback paper, completely ignored Kearney.

40. National Workingmen's Assembly members quoted in Washington Post, Aug. 29, 1878, p. 1, Aug. 13, 1878, p. 1.

For accounts of the meetings of the National Workingmen's Assembly, see Washington Star, Aug. 13, 1878, p. 2, Aug. 15, 1878, p. 4, Aug. 21, 1878, p. 4, Aug. 28, 1878, p. 4, Sept. 3, 1878, p. 3, Sept. 10, 1878, p. 4; Washington Post, Sept. 3, 1878, p. 1.

New York Herald, Aug. 21, 1878, p. 5, Aug. 11, 1878, p. 5; New York Sun, Aug. 13, 1878, p. 4; Chicago Times, Aug. 13, 1878, p. 5, Aug. 23, 1878, p. 5; San Francisco Alta California, Aug. 20, 1878, p. 1; New York Herald, Aug. 19, 1878, p. 5; Philadelphia Inquirer, Sept. 13, 1878, p. 4.

In describing the sparse crowd in Indianapolis, one newspaper noted "the total lack of Irishmen." People from "almost every other nation" attended: "the German, the Frenchman, the Dane, the Swede, the Scandinavian, the African, the Chimpanzee, the American, and 2 Midgets were there, but the Emerald Isle, to its credit, was not represented." (Indianapolis Sentinel, Aug. 19, 1878, p. 1.)

"The Indianapolis demonstration," the Chicago Tribune added smugly, "was a significant sample of the estimate held of Kearney among Western workingmen. He is a failure as a sensationalist in this longitude...." (Chicago Tribune, Aug. 19, 1878.)

41. For more on St. Louis during the railroad strike of 1877, see Philip S. Foner, The Great Labor Uprising of 1877 (New York: Monad, 1977), chapter 9; Robert V. Bruce, 1877: Year of Violence (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1959), pp. 253-60. New York Herald, Aug. 23, 1878, p. 5; Boston Transcript, Nov. 20, 1878, p. 4; San Francisco Alta California, Aug. 23, 1878, p. 1; San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 23, 1878, p. 3; New York Herald, Aug. 23, 1878, p. 5. See also St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Aug. 22, 1878, p. 1.

42. New York Herald, Aug. 23, 1878, p. 5; St. Louis Post, Aug. 23, 1878, p. 4.

43. St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Aug. 21, 1878, p. 7, Aug. 22, 1878, p. 1; St. Louis Post, Aug. 23, 1878, p. 4.

44. See, for example, "Toil" (letter) in Philadelphia Inquirer, Aug. 17, 1878, p. 3; "An Irishman" (letter, New York, Sept. 6) in New York Herald, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 3; John Colton (letter, Holyoke, Aug. 10) in Springfield Republican, Aug. 20, 1878, p. 3. "Mechanic" (letter, Washington, D.C., Aug. 12) in New York Tribune, Aug. 17, 1878, p. 2; "Dad" (letter) in New York Sun, Aug. 17, 1878, p. 2; "By a Mechanic" (letter) in New York Witness, Aug. 15, 1878, p. 1.

45. Boston Pilot, Aug. 17, 1878, p. 4; "A Workingman" (letter), "An Irish Workman" (letter), and "An Observer" (letter, Millbury, Mass., Aug. 16) in Boston Pilot, Aug. 24, 1878, p. 5. The Pilot printed other letters signed "Labor,"

"Worker," and "Iron." John Dorthy (letter, Charlestown, Aug. 15) in ibid.; "O'Brien" (letter, Port Huron, Michigan, Aug. 20) in ibid., Aug. 31, 1878, p. 5. For anti-Chinese articles, see ibid., Dec. 15, 1877, p. 4, April 13, 1878, p. 4, and July 6, 1878, p. 4.

46. "T.V." [Terence V. Powderly] to "Charlie" [Charles H. Litchman], Scranton, Pa., Aug. 24, 1878, Powderly Papers; New York Herald, July 29, 1878, p. 5, Aug. 8, 1878, p. 3. These comments did not prevent Schwab from inviting Kearney to speak in New York. At the speech, he interrupted Kearney and the two engaged in a lively shouting match. Kearney threatened to put him in prison but the crowd appeared to side with Schwab. See New York Herald, Aug. 7, 1878, p. 3; New York Tribune, Sept. 7, 1878, pp. 1-2.

47. New York Tribune, Aug. 2, 1878, p. 2; New York Herald, July 29, 1878, p. 5; National Socialist, Aug. 31, 1878, p. 5. See also New York Graphic, Aug. 1, 1878, p. 211. Samuel Gompers claimed that despite his editorship, McGregor was never a socialist. See Samuel Gompers, Seventy Years of Life and Labor: An Autobiography, Nick Salvatore, ed. (Ithaca: Industrial Labor Relations, Cornell, 1984), pp. 44-5.

48. Indianapolis Sun, Aug. 1, 1878, p. 2; San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 15, 1878, p. 2; Chicago Times, Aug. 23, 1878, p. 5. For background on Chicago socialists see Bruce C. Nelson, Beyond the Martyrs: A Social History of Chicago's Anarchists, 1870-1900 (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1988).

49. St. Louis Post, Aug. 23, 1878, p. 4, Aug. 24, 1878, p. 5.

50. Boston Labor Standard, Oct. 26, 1878, p. 1; "German-American" (letter, San Francisco, Aug. 19) in San Francisco Alta California, Aug. 20, 1878, p. 1; New York Labor Standard, Aug. 11, 1878, p. 1; National Socialist, Aug. 17, 1878, p. 5. In this editorial, the National Socialist encapsulated Kearney's appeal and his drawbacks: "His success lies in his earnestness of style and in voicing popular clamor against the robbery and rascality of to-day. He expresses popular discontent and utters the imprecations of multitudes who are being crushed into poverty and a slavery than which death would be more preferable. How long his sensation will last cannot be predicted. His present course in evading discussions of right and principles is injuring him already."

51. "Precursor" (letter), in National Socialist, Aug. 24, 1878, p. 2; Indianapolis Times reprinted in Socialist,

Sept. 28, 1878, p. 6; Reformer reprinted in Socialist, Oct. 5, 1878, p. 1.

52. B.E.G. Jewett (letter) reprinted from Indianapolis Times in New York Labor Standard, July 28, 1878, p. 4.

53. New York Times, July 29, 1878, p. 1, Sept. 8, 1878, p. 1; Brooklyn Eagle, Sept. 8, 1878, p. 4; San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 19, 1878, p. 3, Nov. 12, 1878, p. 3; Boston Labor Standard, Sept. 14, 1878, p. 1. See also Irish World, Aug. 10, 1878, p. 5; Boston Journal, July 29, 1878, p. 2; National Socialist, Aug. 24, 1878, p. 8. I am indebted to Richard Gyory for the German translation.

54. Springfield Republican, Sept. 12, 1878, p. 8; Denis Kearney, "To the Workingmen of Massachusetts," Sept. 21, 1878, in Boston Globe, Oct. 1, 1878, p. 3.

55. San Francisco Chronicle, Sept. 18, 1878, p. 3; Boston Journal, Sept. 26, 1878, p. 1, Oct. 2, 1878, p. 3; Boston Transcript, Oct. 2, 1878, p. 2; "W.B.R." (correspondent, Boston) in Pittsfield Sun, Oct. 16, 1878, p. 1; Boston Globe, Oct. 2, 1878, p. 4.

56. Boston Journal, Oct. 3, 1878, p. 2, Oct. 4, 1878, p. 2; Boston Transcript, Oct. 3, 1878, p. 2, Sept. 30, 1878, p. 4; Boston Globe, Oct. 3, 1878, p. 4.

57. New York Sun, Aug. 12, 1878, p. 1; "W.B.R." (correspondent, Boston) in Pittsfield Sun, Sept. 25, 1878, p. 1; New York World, quoted in San Francisco Chronicle, Sept. 24, 1878, p. 3.

58. Butler supporters took over the Democratic convention in Worcester and nominated him for governor. Bolting Democrats then held a rival convention in Boston and nominated a different candidate. Although the campaign was technically a three-way race, the real fight was between Butler and the Republican. For a brief summary of the campaign, see Trefousse, Ben Butler: The South Called Him BEAST!, pp. 240-41. A complete account of this lively campaign remains to be written.

59. T.A. Bland (correspondent, Boston) in Indianapolis Sun, Oct. 21, 1878, p. 1; New York Times, Oct. 24, 1878, p. 1; Boston Globe, Sept. 29, 1878, p. 1, Nov. 5, 1878, p. 1, Nov. 3, 1878, p. 1.

60. Accounts of Butler's speeches appeared in the Boston Globe almost every day from Sept. 5 to Sept. 12 and from Sept. 27 to Nov. 5. See also Indianapolis Sun, Aug. 21, 1878, p. 4, Sept. 20, 1878, p. 1, Sept. 21, 1878, p. 4,

Sept. 23, 1878, pp. 1-2, Sept. 24, 1878, pp. 1-2, Sept. 25, 1878, pp. 1-2.

61. New York World, Nov. 5, 1878, p. 4; Springfield Republican, Nov. 1, 1878, p. 8; Boston Transcript, Nov. 1, 1878, p. 2. For accounts of Kearney's speeches in the fall, see Boston Globe, Oct. 8, 1878, p. 1, Oct. 11, 1878, p. 1, Oct. 16, 1878, p. 4, Oct. 17, 1878, p. 4, Oct. 19, 1878, p. 1, Oct. 21, 1878, p. 1, Oct. 28, 1878, p. 4, Nov. 3, 1878, p. 1, Nov. 4, 1878, p. 3; Pittsfield Sun, Oct. 30, 1878, p. 1.

62. Boston Globe, Oct. 30, 1878, p. 1, Nov. 3, 1878, p. 1, Nov. 4, 1878, p. 3, Nov. 5, 1878, p. 1; San Francisco Chronicle, Nov. 3, 1878, p. 8. See also "Scott" (letter, Boston, Aug. 24) in Portland Eastern Argus, Aug. 29, 1878, p. 1.

63. See Richard S. West, Jr., Lincoln's Scapegoat General: A Life of Benjamin F. Butler, 1818-1893 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965), p. 369.

64. Benjamin F. Butler to T.C. Gilman (letter, Boston, Nov. 25) in San Francisco Chronicle, Dec. 1, 1878, p. 8 and Boston Globe, Dec. 1, 1878, p. 1; New York Sun, Nov. 12, quoted in San Francisco Chronicle, Nov. 13, 1878, p. 3; New York World, Nov. 17, 1878, p. 5, Nov. 8, 1878, p. 5; Chicago Times, Nov. 11, 1878, quoted in San Francisco Chronicle, Nov. 12, 1878, p. 3; Boston Globe, Dec. 10, 1878.

65. San Francisco Chronicle, Oct. 11, 1878, p. 3; Springfield Republican, Nov. 13, 1878, p. 5; Boston Globe, Nov. 13, 1878, p. 4; New York World, Nov. 13, 1878, p. 1. "After leaving the hall," the World said of Kearney, "he was unusually profane."

66. New York Herald, Nov. 14, 1878, p. 4. The Boston Globe failed to cover this meeting.

67. Boston Globe, Nov. 18, 1878, p. 1; New York World, Nov. 20, 1878, p. 5.

68. Boston Globe, July 28, 1878, p. 1; letter (Boston, Aug. 20) in Pittsfield Sun, Aug. 28, 1878, p. 1; Philadelphia Times, quoted in Springfield Republican, Sept. 24, 1878, p. 4; Schilling quoted in Chicago Times, Aug. 23, 1878, p. 5; New York World, Aug. 10, 1878, p. 4. In a similar analogy, the Chicago News wrote that Kearney "went up like a balloon and came down like a rag." (Chicago News, Aug. 28, 1878.)

69. Boston Globe, Aug. 6, 1878, p. 1.

70. U.S. Congress, Investigation by a Select Committee of the House of Representatives Relative to the Causes of the General Depression in Labor and Business, Etc., 45th Cong., 2nd session, Misc. Doc. #29 (Washington, D.C., 1879). A list of witnesses appears on pp. 673-75.

71. Ibid., pp. 334-39. The quote is from p. 338. Elliott favored immigration restriction "if the public good requires it.... We are not bound to take all the surplus population produced in Germany, Ireland, China, and everywhere else."

72. Ibid., pp. 418, 419, 432. For background on Cohen, see Washington Star, June 26, 1878, p. 4, July 10, 1878, p. 4, July 24, 1878, p. 4, Aug. 13, 1878, p. 2, Aug. 30, 1878, p. 4, Jan. 14, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 4, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 11, 1879, p. 4, Apr. 22, 1879, p. 4; Washington Post, July 29, 1878, p. 4, Aug. 2, 1878, p. 4; New York Times, July 30, 1878; San Francisco Alta California, Sept. 24, 1878, p. 2. No doubt the National Workingmen's Assembly had Cohen in mind when it denounced the House Committee as a failure, singling out Hewitt for listening to "a class of the lowest and most insignificant persons he could find." On Cohen's foray into politics as a Greenbacker and his run-in with Dyer D. Lum, see Isaac Cohen to James Garfield, Oct. 25, 1880, Garfield Papers, Library of Congress.

In addition to Elliott and Cohen, the Chinese were mentioned in passing by four other testifiers. The Committee received more than a hundred letters. Only two of them mentioned Chinese immigration and favored restriction. Both were from California. See ibid., pp. 53, 122, 143, 146, 658, 664.

73. Ibid., p. 41.

74. Ibid., p. 103.

75. Ibid., pp. 103-04.

76. Cigar Makers' Official Journal, Aug. 10, 1878, p. 2, Sept. 10, 1878, p. 3; New York Dispatch, Aug. 11, 1878, p. 4.

77. Chicago Times, Aug. 3, 1878, p. 3, Aug. 23, 1878, p. 3; New York Times, Aug. 6, 1878, p. 4; New York Tribune, Aug. 3, 1878, pp. 3, 4. Harpers' Weekly was an exception, and praised the Hewitt Committee. See Aug. 24, 1878, p. 667.

78. New York Tribune, Sept. 7, 1878, p. 2. "The workingman who degraded his manhood by appearing before such a committee," Kearney told his listeners in New York City,

"... deserves the condemnation of honest men." His mention of the Hewitt Committee, the Tribune noted, caused "increased confusion" among the crowd.

79. Irish World, Sept. 14, 1878, p. 2; New York Times, Aug. 11, 1878, p. 12; New York Herald, Aug. 11, 1878, p. 7; New York Dispatch, Aug. 11, 1878, p. 4. For examples of misquoted or incomplete excerpts, see New York Tribune, Aug. 6, 1878, p. 2; New York Herald, Aug. 3, 1878, pp. 2, 6; Springfield Republican, Aug. 3, 1878; Philadelphia Inquirer, Aug. 3, 1878, p. 8, Aug. 6, 1878, p. 8. For a humorous account of the Hewitt Committee, see Heinz Ickstadt and Hartmut Keil, eds., "A Forgotten Piece of Working-Class Literature: Gustav Lyser's Satire of the Hewitt Hearing of 1878," Labor History (Winter 1979), pp. 127-40.

80. San Francisco Chronicle, Nov. 12, 1878, p. 3; letter (Dec. 18) in San Francisco Alta California, Dec. 24, 1878, p. 1; Chicago Times, Aug. 19, 1878, p. 1; Sargent interviewed in Washington Star, Nov. 26, 1878, p. 1. For more on Walsh, see Robert Ernst, "The One and Only Mike Walsh," New-York Historical Society Quarterly 26 (1952), pp. 43-65; Sean Wilentz, Chants Democratic: New York and the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850 (New York: Oxford, 1984); Edward Pessen, "Pre-Industrial New York City Labour Revisited: A Critique of a Recent Thompsonian Analysis," Labour/Le Travail 16 (Fall 1985), pp. 233-37. Wilentz focuses on Walsh's class-based populism and basically ignores his racist appeal. For more on Watson, see C. Vann Woodward, Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel (New York: Oxford, 1938).

81. See, for example, James G. Blaine, et. al., "Ought the Negro to Be Disfranchised? Ought He to Have Been Enfranchised?" North American Review, March 1879, pp. 230-31.

82. San Francisco Chronicle, Dec. 27, 1878, p. 3.

CHAPTER 8

"ROLLING IN THE DIRT":

THE FIFTEEN PASSENGER ACT OF 1879

"John Chinaman will not have visited the country for nothing if it proves that he has succeeded in taking down the towering pretensions of the Republican party on the subject of races. All thoughtful men knew it would come sooner or later, and the Mongolian can [now] claim to have fulfilled his mission in the West."

--Boston Post, Feb. 1879

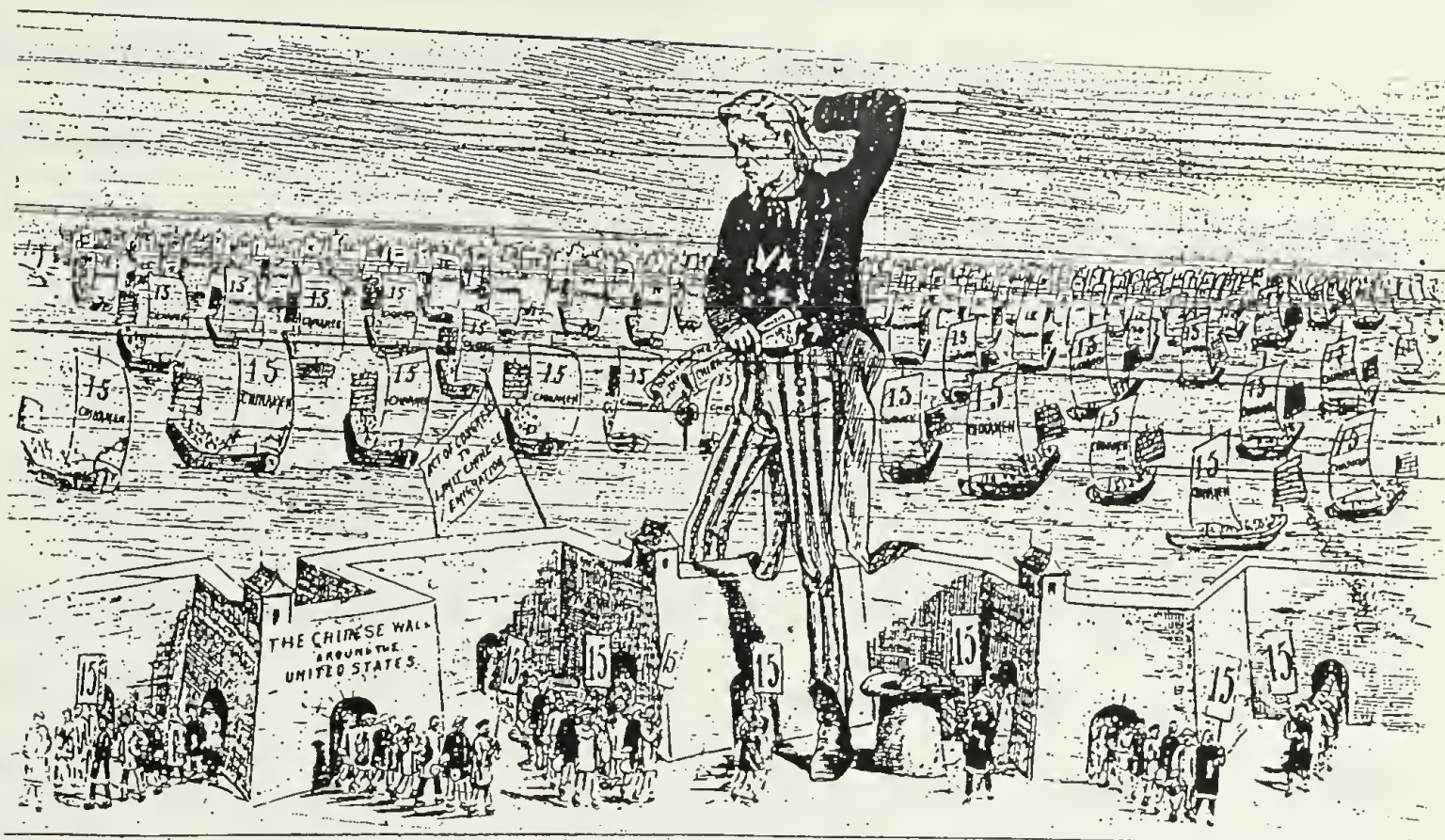
No man hungered more for the presidency in the Gilded Age than James Gillespie Blaine. As Speaker of the House from 1869 to 1875, Senator from 1876 to 1881, and twice Secretary of State, he was the era's preeminent politician, the consummate Washington insider who dictated the party's agenda and a spellbinding orator who electrified crowds. The "mere magic of his presence," wrote one fawning biographer, could provoke "cries of frantic enthusiasm." The gruff Thaddeus Stevens remarked on "the magnetic manner of my friend from Maine," and indeed, almost everyone has employed the term magnetism when trying to describe Blaine's appeal. Magnetism can either attract or repel. "There has probably never been a man in our history upon whom so few people have looked with indifference," wrote his contemporary, Senator George Frisbie Hoar. "He was born to be loved or hated. Nobody occupied a middle ground as to

him." What was it about Blaine that provoked such extreme reactions in people? As a legislator he had many admirable qualities. He started out as an anti-slavery Whig editor in the 1850s. He converted early to Republicanism and became, at age 26, one of the youngest delegates to the party's first national convention. He was a fierce Lincoln partisan during the war and an early advocate of black suffrage and radical reconstruction. As Speaker, he once called Representative Joseph H. Rainey to chair proceedings in the House, marking the first time a black man presided over Congress.¹

Symbolism aside, no one ever accused Blaine of being an idealist. He had little interest in abstract principles or ideals. He used his office for private gain, accepted gifts from financier Jay Cooke, and had been implicated in the Credit Mobilier scandal. The taint of corruption followed Blaine throughout his career. But if Blaine amassed a fortune in politics, he was no more corrupt than many a Gilded Age politician. What distinguished him from his contemporaries was his advocacy and mastery of machine politics and his undisguised ambition for higher office. In an age when the office--at least the presidency--was supposed to seek the man, Blaine openly lusted for the White House. As fellow Senator Zachariah Chandler put it, the Maine Republican suffered from the "incurable disease of presidential fever." And Blaine himself confided to his

wife, "When I want a thing, I want it dreadfully." This craving for the presidency made even his closest associates wary. "I like Blaine--always have--" his friend James Garfield wrote in his diary, "yet there is an element in him which I distrust." Many people distrusted Blaine--The Nation called him "the noisiest Republican agitator now to be found in public life," while the New York Times called him an "utter scoundrel"--but no one questioned his abilities, his influence, or his following. The man reputedly never forgot a name or a face, and even detractors acknowledged his consummate charm. After narrowly losing the Republican nomination in 1876 he would be the front-runner at every convention for the next twelve years. To understand James Blaine one must bear in mind that virtually every speech he made and every word he uttered were designed to land himself in the White House. Possessing superb political instincts, the "plumed knight," as his admirers called him, cast his shadow over every Republican of his generation. "He had a keen sense of the public's wants," one observer noted, and the "ability to recognize the leading topic of the moment." In the winter of 1879, the leading topic was Chinese immigration. James Blaine would have sold his soul to be president, but as that was not possible he sold out the Chinese instead.²

On January 14, 1878, long before the red scare and Greenback agitation in the spring, long before Kearney's swing east in the summer and fall, and long before Senator Blaine's off-hand comments at a dinner party early in the winter, Representative Thomas Wren [R-NV] introduced a bill in the House of Representatives to restrict Chinese immigration. It was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor, and there it languished for an entire year. As 1879 dawned, however, and the 45th Congress gathered for its final session, the issue had gained new momentum. The Education and Labor Committee presented Bill Number 2423 to the full House on January 14, 1879; it came up for consideration two weeks later. The Fifteen Passenger Act, as it was popularly called, limited the number of Chinese passengers permitted on any ship coming to the United States to fifteen. Violation of the act would make the ship's captain liable to a prison term of up to six months and a fine of \$100 for each Chinese passenger exceeding fifteen. The Fifteen Passenger Act, which was to go into effect on July 1, 1879, had one major loophole: the bill only covered entry by sea. Chinese immigrants would still be free to sail to Canada or Mexico, then cross into the United States by rail. Nonetheless, the Fifteen Passenger Act was the first actual immigration restriction law aimed at a particular nationality ever drafted, debated, and ultimately passed by the United States Congress.³ [See figure 8.1]



HANG OUT OUR BANNERS ON THE CHINESE WALL; THE CRY IS STILL "THEY COME!"

Figure 8.1. A troubled Uncle Sam looks on as hundreds of Chinese junks sail to the United States. In reality, this novel approach to getting around the Fifteen Passenger Act was seldom mentioned.

Source: New York Graphic, February 1, 1879.

The House Committee issued a brief report accompanying the bill that recommended its passage. "The evils of Chinese immigration," the report stated,

have been fully recognized upon the Pacific slope for many years. Welcomed at first as a unique addition and a valuable ally in the development of the material resources of their new home, the Chinese, by their sordid, selfish, immoral, and non-amalgamating habits, within a very short time ... came to be regarded as a standing menace to the social and political institutions of the country.

The report recounted the history of Congressional efforts to restrict entry of the Chinese, beginning with the bill championed by Senator Stewart in the 41st Congress. (That this early bill focused on importation and not immigration was overlooked.) The report highlighted the "voluminous testimony" and the majority report of the Congressional Investigating Committee on Chinese Immigration of 1876-77. It also underlined the recent joint resolution of Congress urging the President to renegotiate the Burlingame Treaty, and the numerous petitions submitted by Westerners during the past decade indicating "the almost unanimous sentiment of the people of the Pacific slope ... that Chinese immigration was a great evil." The report defended the legality of the bill, and in closing emphasized the alleged dangers of a foreign people unable or unwilling to adapt to American ways: "It is neither possible nor desirable for two races as distinct as the Caucasian and Mongolian to live under the same government without assimilation...."

Homogeneity of ideas and of physical and social habits are essential to national harmony and progress."⁴

Representative Horace F. Page [R-CA] delivered the keynote address supporting the bill. A Republican for twenty years, he recognized "the guaranteed rights of all, without regard to race, color, or previous condition, and the protection of all alike under one flag in accordance with the Constitution of the country"--except when it came to the Chinese. These "filthy ... aliens," Page said, "are unfitted by education, habits, religious superstition, and by their inborn prejudices to assume any of the duties" of American citizenship. "[T]his overflowing hive" of people from China had "cursed California" with their "animal needs ... personal debasement ... [and] servile condition." The Chinese, he said, made up one-sixth of the population of California but paid only a fraction--one four-hundredth--of the state's taxes. Furthermore, seven out of eight Chinese belonged to "the criminal classes." Yet, Page did acknowledge the difference between immigration and importation. There are those Chinese, he said, "who seek our shores for the mere purpose of curiosity or trade" and those who "are brought here as coolies by companies formed in China under contract for servile labor." The distinction mattered little, however, because all Chinese, whether free or under contract, "retard desirable immigration from Europe." The U.S. indeed welcomed newcomers, Page said, but

the "immigration sought has always been Caucasian." Race clearly overshadowed economics. And while Page noted that the Chinese "inspire a profound irritation and discontent among all citizens of all classes," he urged passage of the act specifically to help labor. "We advocate the proposed bill, finally, in the interest of the workingmen of our own section and of our whole land," he said. "I suggest ... that in order to bring relief to the workingmen of the country they shall be protected by legitimate legislation not only against contact but competition with the paupers and criminals of other lands."⁵

To demonstrate the bill's nationwide appeal, Albert S. Willis, a Kentucky Democrat, delivered a similarly vitriolic speech against the Chinese. He too stressed the debased habits, immorality, and inherent racial deficiencies of the Chinese. With "their low groveling ideas of virtue and religion," he said, they had "made themselves obnoxious" wherever they went. "[W]hether as a laborer, as a member of society, or of the body-politic, ... [t]he Chinaman is an undesirable and dangerous element in any community." Like Page, Willis favored the bill as a means to help the "laboring-men who comprise four-fifths of our population." He praised immigrants from Germany, Ireland, and elsewhere who came to the U.S. and adopted American ways. "As kindred drops of water they have mingled and been lost in the great stream of American life. The Chinese have no such intention

or experience." To the contrary, the Chinese "have always been and will always be an alien element in our midst. We want no such indigestible substance in the body-politic. We want a brave, patriotic, self-reliant, assimilative citizenship."⁶

The Fifteen Passenger Act inspired virtually no debate in the House of Representatives. George D. Robinson [R-MA] dismissed the bill as "cheap nostrums," but only one member, Martin I. Townsend [R-NY], spoke at any length against it. In a highly partisan speech, the Troy Republican attacked the bill as a modern version of Know-Nothingism. "I am not for taking a step backward," he said. "I am for going forward and treating the human race as brothers." Democratic Representative Augustus A. Hardenbergh of New Jersey agreed. "Never before," he remarked in a speech inserted into the Congressional Record, "has it been found necessary to prohibit immigration to our shores.... The question embraced within the bill is simply this: Is freedom incompatible with any race, and may it not extend its all-conquering arm to every condition of man." To Hardenbergh the answer was simple:

... this continent, dedicated to freedom and progress, will extend its arms to every race.... I cannot ... give consent by my voice or vote that any single portion of my country shall close its ports to the oppressed of earth, from whatever clime they come or beneath whatever skies they may chance to have been born.

Townsend and Hardenbergh comprised the extent of the formal opposition in the House. A few representatives, however, suggested modifications of the bill to make it less stringent. Representative Joseph G. Cannon [R-IL], later to become the autocratic Speaker of the House, urged excepting Chinese students, travelers, and diplomats from the bill's provisions. Omar Conger [R-MI], urged excepting Chinese shipwrecked at sea. And James A. Garfield [R-OH], calling the act a violation of the Burlingame Treaty, urged delaying its effective date until "due notice has been given to China." But the Speaker rejected these demands as out of order and brought the bill to a vote a few minutes later.⁷

On January 28, 1879, the Fifteen Passenger Act passed the House by a comfortable margin, 155 to 72 (with 61 not voting). As Martin Townsend remarked, "Kearney was [now] represented in the national halls." Democrats endorsed the measure overwhelmingly, 104 to 16 (with 31 not voting). Republicans split fairly evenly, 51 to 56 (with 30 not voting). The breakdown of the vote largely supported the claim by the New York Times "that the Democratic House is entitled to the credit of passing the bill." The Times, however, overlooked the fact that Republicans contributed a substantial number of supporting votes. Had party members united against the bill they could have easily defeated it. Had 42 Republican supporters (or fewer if those not voting had cast a ballot against the bill) switched their votes the

bill would have lost. Most significantly, just 56 of the party's 137 members opposed the bill. Twelve of the 30 non-voting Republicans were paired either with Democrats or fellow Republicans. Of these twelve, one stated support for the bill. Just two stated opposition. Adding these negatives to the total, only 58--a mere 42%--of the Republicans in the House of Representatives went on record as opposing the Fifteen Passenger Act. It was hardly a ringing endorsement for Chinese immigration.⁸

The press practically ignored the House vote, and failed to give the matter much attention until the bill reached the Senate floor. Here the real showdown took place. With a 39 to 37 seat edge, the Republicans could control the Senate calendar and take fuller responsibility for the bill's outcome. Debate began on February 13 and raged for three days. It revealed clearly the competing factions in the Republican party split between the ideals of the past and realities of the present. Democrats too showed a fair degree of conflict indicating further that the Republicans no longer held a monopoly on principle. The only group united, as it had been for years, was the West Coast irrespective of party. Five of the six Western senators delivered lengthy speeches advocating the bill. To Aaron Sargent, the California Republican who had led the battle-cry in 1876, belonged the honor of introducing the bill and delivering the keynote speech. From his opening

sentence he tried to downplay the path-breaking nature of closing the doors of the United States. "There is nothing novel or strange in the legislation proposed," he said, "except that it is directed to one people instead of to all peoples." That, of course, was the entire point. The legislation was directed at one people--the Chinese--and Sargent spent the better part of his speech explaining why. They are "a strange people," he said, who "speak a foreign and impenetrable tongue." They read neither books nor newspapers and live packed together in places "so filthy that no white man can stand the stench." Their settlements, he added, "are nests of contagion," breeding epidemics of small-pox and outbreaks of leprosy. "This vast horde of people bring no families"--only "vile women" who spread diseases. All Chinese, he said, "are guilty of hideous immoralities wherever they are, so that they become offensive to any community where they go." "This is not," he concluded, "American civilization; this is filthy squalid barbarism...." Sargent quoted every source he could find, from Bayard Taylor to the London Times, from the rulers of Siam to the Russian ambassador. He emphasized that people the world over--the English, the Dutch, the French, and the Spanish, and all the inhabitants of regions colonized by Europe--despised the Chinese. Even "the Hindoos and other Asiatic races which we have been disposed to consider in the lowest scale of humanity will not associate with the

Chinese." Sinophobia, he stressed, was universal:

"Wherever they go there is this same feeling with regard to them, this same attempt to void them from the public stomach." The U.S. had ample reason to limit "this flood of heathens" who came not to settle but "simply ... to spoil the country." America was not for them. "Was it," Sargent asked, "the design of the founders of this Government that we should be a mere slop-pail into which all the dregs of humanity should be poured?" The answer was obvious.⁹

Sargent was a Republican and proud of his party's past. "I have no sympathy with agrarian notions;" he said, "I believe in the rights of property; I believe in peace and order; I have no sympathy with Kearneyism; I am speaking in no such interest." Rather, Sargent claimed to be speaking for the working classes. The Chinese, he said, had "invaded ... every avocation except the newspaper and the law." As a result, American laborers were on the brink of starvation unable to find work or support their families. He stressed the meager diet and low standard of living of the Chinese immigrant. "[H]e can live on a dead rat and a few handfuls of rice," he said, and is happy to "work for ten cents a day.... How can the American laborer compete with that?" He reminded his colleagues of the recent "labor riots" and concluded: "these considerations ... should go to every Senator's mind." If the restriction of Chinese immigration

could buy a few more years of labor peace, it would be a small price to pay.¹⁰

Fellow Western senators hammered home the same message. "The discontent of labor is a powerful factor in our society and politics, to-day," said California's junior senator Newton Booth [R-CA]. "[I]ts suffering is real, and he who is deaf to its cries may live to be sensible of its power." If Chinese immigration continued unabated, "the discontent of labor will take the form of violent anger or sullen despair" and "become an element of revolution." Only Chinese immigration restriction could prevent a bloody upheaval. Senator John P. Jones [R-NV] agreed. To invite Chinese immigration, he warned, "is to invite disorder, commotion, and massacre." Public order required restriction. "It is of very little consequence," he added, distorting the demands of the working classes, "whether the Chinese in this country are called slaves or freemen." To workers this was indeed the essential difference. But to Western senators this distinction hardly mattered. Chinese immigration threatened national security. "The strikes of white laborers may be annoying," Jones continued, "and their demands ... may not always be reasonable; but their training and traditions, hopes and family ties, make them upholders of law and the ready, sturdy defenders of the Government against its enemies, foreign and domestic." In arguments that eerily foreshadowed the World War II internment of

Japanese-Americans two generations later, Jones charged that an "alien race ... among us ... would swell the ranks of any invasion.... We should be liable always to insurrection and compelled constantly to be on our guard against it."

Extending this idea one step further, Senator La Fayette Grover [D-OR] remarked that with a workforce and army "composed largely of Mongolians, ... the United States, in a military point of view, would become the sport of Europe."¹¹

To Western senators, however, fears of working-class rebellion and foreign invasion paled besides the exigencies of race. In demanding passage of the Fifteen Passenger Act, Westerners unleashed some of the most virulent racism ever heard on the Senate floor. "The meeting of two civilizations antagonistic in every form and feature in a struggle for extinction in the same country cannot be other than an event of momentous historical importance," Senator Booth declared. "As statesmen, looking before and after, we cannot ignore the fact of race antipathies." Racial differences presented an unbridgeable chasm. "We cannot reverse the law that the amalgamation of certain races results in an offspring inferior to both," Booth stated. "The darkest passages of human history have been enacted when alien races have been brought into contact." Western senators conjured up images of forced racial mingling and used Chinese immigration to evoke the recent failure of

Reconstruction, an issue many Republicans now wanted to shed. "We want no more mixture of races," Senator Grover said. "No strong nation was ever born of mongrel races of men." Race and culture became inseparable in the minds of these senators. The Chinese were a "delving, tenacious, accumulating people," the Oregon Democrat explained, to whom progress remained unknown.

We find here a type of man unchanged through all the ages of tradition. His gods are yet made by human hands, and he bows down and worships idols.... When he comes among us he brings with him all he has and all he is--his gods, his government, his language, his hieroglyphics, his unchanged customs, his clothing, his chopsticks, and, as far as possible, his food. He is a man among us but not of us. He is not bone of our bone, nor flesh of our flesh, and never can be.

The Chinese immigrant was a force of destruction. "He never adds to, but subtracts from, the resources of the country. He never builds up, but hastens to a common decay every place he most inhabits." Grover likened the Chinese to "locusts" who threatened "to eat out our substance and to destroy" American life. "He is not wanted on the Pacific coast," he said. "He is not wanted in the South." And, he warned, "If the North receive him, they will harbor a parasite, who will absorb their lifeblood and fatten upon their decay." Animal imagery being popular, Senator John H. Mitchell [R-OR] compared the Chinese to a "great anaconda" squeezing the life out of American civilization. Congressmen, he said, must act "as defenders of the purity of our political and social fabric against the

contaminating, corroding, and destructive effects of the imperial customs and practices of overwhelming numbers of Asiatic barbarians."¹²

The most vicious attacks on the Chinese came from Senator John P. Jones. "Their peculiar sexual vices are flagrant, repulsive, and odious," the Nevada Republican said.

The greatest evil to be feared is the degrading influence which their presence will exert on our tastes, our morals, and our manners, and upon our civilization itself. Chinese civilization is purely an economical one. There is not a humane feature in it. Good and bad, right and wrong, reward and punishment, are all commutable in money.

The Chinese had no code of ethics, no standards of decency. "[T]his race," he said, "well-known to possess crafty methods, violent passions, and a reckless disregard for their own lives," were "capable of conspiring arson, murder, and revolution ... and [were] restrained by no moral, religious, or political ideas whatever." Although Jones claimed that he "endeavor[ed] to discard all race prejudices" from the debate, he stated: "In the most favorable view of the Chinese ... they are far below the white race in Europe...." With their "dull, dead inanity," they were impervious to change, incapable of advancement, and barren of culture. They knew as little of beauty "as the lowest animal that crawls upon the face of the earth." For over three hours, Jones bombarded his colleagues with this racist tirade.

We object to the presence of the Chinese now in our midst, and to their further incoming, because their ideals of excellence, of beauty, and of right and wrong, differ so radically from our own as to leave us without a common standard by which good and evil may be judged; because his race is the antipode of ours in hopes, fears, traditions, philosophy, and religion. He turns his back on the future and we ours on the past. His religion teaches him to look toward the past and to propitiate his dead ancestors by making sacrifices over ancestral graves, while ours teaches us to look to the future and seek the approval of God by doing good in the present and by making sacrifices for posterity. We oppose the incoming of the Chinese because their civilization is stagnant, and imbedded under the petrified layers of uncounted centuries of oppression, superstition, and tradition, while ours, fresh and new, is instinct with progressive activity.

Without question, Jones concluded, "race counts as the greatest factor in the progress and decay of nations." The Chinese race threatened to "drag us far down from that high destiny which ages of heroic effort and self-denial have fitted us to inherit...." In one of his more lurid metaphors, Jones summed up the dangers of the Chinese: "We oppose their coming because our sturdy Aryan tree will wither in root, trunk, and branch, if this noxious vine be permitted to entwine itself around it."¹³

The rhetoric of these Western senators far exceeded anything uttered by Kearney on his Eastern swing. Although they consciously sought to distance themselves from the "Sand-Lot Orator" and his "hoodlum audience," their message was exactly the same: The Chinese must go. This message, of course, was nothing new. For the better part of a decade Western politicians had argued in Washington for a restriction of Chinese immigration, and the racist images

and stereotypes they invoked in their advocacy of the Fifteen Passenger Act were common fare by the late 1870s. Only the magnitude of the anti-Chinese onslaught was new, as Westerners unleashed every thunderbolt in their arsenal in an effort to convert their Eastern colleagues to immigration restriction. Long accustomed to hearing such attacks from Pacific Coast politicians, no one in the East was really surprised by the intensity of their comments. They were to be expected; they were to be endured. Senators from east of the Rocky Mountains had, themselves, largely avoided debate on the issue of Chinese exclusion during the 1870s. They could well afford to, as their constituents expressed little interest in the matter. Eastern senators had heeded Westerners' cries so far as calling for an investigation into the subject and supporting renegotiation of the Burlingame Treaty, but their involvement had been passive, not active. Before Kearney's tour of the East in 1878, senators east of the Rockies had been passengers rather than drivers of the vehicle of Chinese exclusion. In the winter of 1879 this suddenly changed. James Blaine himself stepped forward.

On February 14, the "plumed knight" took center stage on the Senate floor as he delivered his first speech ever on Chinese immigration. The Fifteen Passenger Act, Blaine said, "divides itself naturally into two parts, one of form

and one of great substance. The one of form is whether we may rightfully adopt this mode of terminating the [Burlingame] treaty, for after all it relates to form. The second and graver question is whether it is desirable to exclude Chinese immigration from this country." Blaine wasted little time on the first part. The U.S. had every right to break a treaty, he argued, and besides, the Chinese themselves had violated the treaty numerous times. So much for form. Blaine emphasized the "second and graver" part of the issue:

I am opposed to the Chinese coming here.... The Asiatic cannot go on with our population and make a homogeneous element. The idea of comparing European immigration with an immigration that has no regard to family, that does not recognize the relation of husband and wife, that does not observe the tie of parent and child, that does not have in the slightest degree the ennobling and the civilizing influences of the hearthstone and the fireside!

Allow in the "degraded" civilization of the Chinese, he said, and it "will inevitably degrade us." He envisioned "the vast ... incalculable hordes in China" threatening to overwhelm the nation and "throttle and impair the prosperity of ... the United States." The economic argument, however, took a backseat to race.

I supposed if there was any people in the world that had a race trouble on hand it was ourselves. I supposed if the admonitions of our own history were anything to us we should regard the race trouble as the one thing to be dreaded and the one thing to be avoided. We are not through with it yet. It cost us a great many lives; it cost a great many millions of treasure....

The specter of failed Reconstruction policy weighed heavily on Blaine's mind, and he no longer wanted the nation--or the Republican party--to be burdened with the issue.

Does any man here to-day assume that we have so entirely solved and satisfactorily settled on a permanent basis all the troubles growing out of the negro-race trouble...? If any gentleman looking into the future of this country sees ... peace and good order and absolute freedom from any trouble growing out of race, he sees with more sanguine eyes than mine. With this trouble upon us here ... to deliberately sit down and invite another or permit another and far more serious trouble seems to be the very recklessness of statesmanship.

The U.S., in other words, had enough racial problems and did not need new ones. To Blaine, the primary goal of statesmanship was to maintain order rather than to serve justice. "[Y]ou must deal with things as you find them," he said. "I think it is a good deal cheaper and more direct way to avoid the trouble by preventing the immigration." Echoing the apocalyptic tone of his Western colleagues, Blaine stated: "either the Anglo-Saxon race will possess the Pacific slope or the Mongolians will possess it."¹⁴

Blaine's speech lacked the vitriolic content of that of his Western colleagues but his position was the same: The Chinese must go. And just in case anyone failed to hear his speech, Blaine made a special point of publicizing his views one week later. On February 21, he wrote a lengthy letter to the New York Tribune that was reprinted widely throughout the nation. He essentially restated the themes from his oration in Congress but turned up the volume several

notches. Chinese immigration, he wrote, was "vicious" and "odious."

If as a nation we have the right to keep out infectious diseases, if we have the right to exclude the criminal classes from coming to us, we surely have the right to exclude that immigration which reeks with impurity and which cannot come to us without plenteously sowing the seeds of moral and physical disease, destitution, and death.

Nothing in all history, he said, could compare with "the atrocious nastiness" of San Francisco's Chinatown, except perhaps the "feculence and foulness of Sodom and Gomorrah." The Chinese bred "plague" and "pestilence" wherever they went; to permit their immigration would "physically contaminate" and "morally corrupt" the nation.¹⁵

Blaine enumerated ten distinct reasons justifying the restriction of Chinese immigration and passage of the Fifteen Passenger Act:

- 1) "all" Chinese immigrants were imported as contract laborers;
- 2) Chinese immigrants were 90% male, lacked wives and families, and female Chinese immigrants were prostitutes;
- 3) the Chinese did not assimilate and become Americans;
- 4) they came as "servile" laborers "in some aspects more revolting and corrupting than African slavery";
- 5) the Chinese, with their "'practically inexhaustible'" numbers could overrun California and the nation;
- 6) China had already violated the Burlingame Treaty;
- 7) restriction would not harm trade with China;
- 8) a large disfranchised population presented a danger to the nation;
- 9) the Chinese were heathens nearly incapable of conversion to Christianity; and
- 10) the working classes demanded Chinese immigration restriction and deserved it.¹⁶

Blaine stressed this last point. "I feel and know," he said, "that I am pleading the cause of the free American

laborer and of his children and of his children's children." No matter that "the free American laborer" had for years distinguished between voluntary and imported Chinese immigrants. No matter that "the free American laborer" had for years welcomed open immigration "from every clime." No matter that "the free American laborer" east of the Rockies had repudiated Kearney and his cry, "The Chinese must go." Blaine cared little about the exact demands of the working classes. He cared even less about regulating or rectifying the American economy or discussing methods of alleviating poverty and working-class suffering. Blaine did care about law and order, however, and he did care about labor unrest, particularly the bloody railroad strike of 1877 and the threatened working-class uprising of 1878. "[D]iscontent among unemployed thousands has already manifested a spirit of violence," he warned, "and but recently arrested travel between the Atlantic and the Mississippi by armed mobs which defied the States and commanded great trunk lines of railways to cease operations." As if this weren't enough, nine Southern states remained racked by a chronic "race trouble." With revolutionary disturbances brewing and race problems rife, the military was presently stretched to its limits preserving the peace. "Practical statesmanship," Blaine concluded, "would suggest that the Government of the United States has its hands full...." Herein Blaine stated the nub of the problem. Working-class militancy frightened

him and the Republican party. Race differences had recently torn the country in two and precipitated civil war. Now class differences threatened to do the same. The government indeed had "its hands full"--and Chinese immigration restriction presented an easy, simple "solution." Blaine's argument was masterful. In pitting class against class and race against race, he effectively killed two birds with a single stone: he could now pose as the champion of peace and order and claim all the while he was on the side of the workingman. Blaine's conversion to the exclusionist banner marked a turning point in the anti-Chinese movement. As the most influential Republican in the nation (with the possible exception of lame-duck President Rutherford B. Hayes), Blaine single-handedly raised the politics of racism to a new level. Whereas Denis Kearney could be dismissed as a mindless demagogue, James Blaine was running for president. And therein lay the difference.¹⁷

The presidential election of 1876, when measured by popular vote, had been the closest in over thirty years. The electoral vote, 185-184, remains to this day the closest in American history. Blaine well knew that the election of 1880--which he hoped to win--could be just as close. He also knew that three of the closest battles had taken place in the West. Hayes had captured California by less than 3,000 votes out of 156,000 votes cast--a slim 1.8 percent.

Hayes carried Oregon and Nevada by just over 1,000 votes each. With the parties almost evenly divided in the West, Blaine knew that an extreme anti-Chinese stance could make the difference. "The local troubles on the Pacific slope have caught his eye and aroused his ambition," remarked one detractor from the Senator's home state. "He imagines that they will be exactly the hobby-horse that will carry him to the Presidential chair." Blaine hoped that such a stance would first secure him his party's nomination by guaranteeing support from Western delegates at the upcoming national convention. "Mr. Blaine made no secret at a very early stage of the [Congressional] session ... of his anxiety to have it known, and well and widely known on the Pacific coast, that he opposed Chinese immigration," the Utica Herald noted. "He was weaker there in 1876 than in any other republican community not ruled by a well-drilled machine."¹⁸

Blaine's sudden embrace of anti-Chinese politics had another ulterior aim. In November 1878, 37 of the nation's 38 states elected their representatives to the 46th Congress which was scheduled to meet in December 1879. California, however, unlike every other state in the union, elected its Congressional delegation in odd-numbered years. Its four representatives to the 46th Congress would be chosen in September 1879. If Blaine and the Republican party could take credit for the Fifteen Passenger Act, it might help

swing the election to the Republicans. Such a victory could be vital in the next presidential contest if, as many politicians predicted, the closeness of the electoral vote prevented any one candidate from claiming a majority and threw the election into the House of Representatives. Such a possibility was not far-fetched. It had just happened in 1876, and the electoral equation had now become more complicated by the unexpected rise of the Greenback party. Greenbackers had received more than a million votes nationwide in 1878 and captured 14 seats in the new Congress. Their success stunned almost everyone, and their popularity seemed to be waxing. "A curious phenomenon," Representative James Garfield [R-OH] noted in his diary in December 1878, "is presented in the fact that the Greenback Party shows more signs of activity since the election than before and seems to be bent on proselyting the people and increasing its strength." The unpredictable Greenback factor struck fear into Republicans everywhere. George C. Gorham, chairman of the Republican Congressional Committee and Secretary of the Senate, confided to Blaine that Greenback success had created "a good deal of panic" and could spell "disaster" for the party. John Tyler, Jr., collector of customs in Buffalo and a high-ranking Republican functionary, confided to Treasury Secretary John Sherman (also a possible presidential candidate) that the Greenback threat was "decidedly formidable" and that the new

party could soon "hold the balance of power" in Congress.¹⁹

Blaine and fellow politicians had one last very real concern if the presidential election of 1880 was to be thrown into the House. According to the Constitution, each state delegation regardless of size casts a single vote for president in the House of Representatives. Not counting California or Indiana, a strict party vote by state in 1880 would have yielded a perfect balance of 18-18 in the House. Indiana's 13-seat delegation divided evenly--6 Democrats to 6 Republicans--with one Greenbacker. This Greenbacker, the Rev. Gilbert De La Matyr (nicknamed "the Indiana enigma"), could thus become "kingmaker" if the election ended up in the House of Representatives. Unless of course, one party prevailed in California. If Blaine could grab the state for the Republicans, then he (or at least his party) might then capture the presidency. The Golden State's four-seat delegation potentially held the key to the White House. This made the stakes exceedingly high. As the New York World sneered, "If the [Fifteen Passenger] bill had been entitled 'a bill to bag the Congressional representation from California in September, 1879,' it would have been exactly and honestly described."²⁰

Blaine thus had three goals in championing Chinese exclusion: influencing the California election later in the year; swinging Western delegates to his side at the

Republican Convention in 1880; and capturing the presidency the following November. Blaine would fulfill two of these goals. The final and most critical one, however, would forever elude him. Nonetheless, he had, with one single oration (and letter) thrust himself in the forefront of the anti-Chinese movement. He took a calculated gamble that his exacerbation of racial fears would catapult him into the White House. His sudden embrace of racial politics (and the Fifteen Passenger Act) surprised some observers. "It appeared especially strange," the Cleveland Herald remarked, "that Mr. Blaine, whose heart has always beat in sympathy for the oppressed and whose eloquent voice has so often been heard in their behalf, should appear as the champion of this measure." Few others were so naive. Blaine, the Hartford Courant noted, was simply "striking for the vote of California." The New York Sun was blunter:

Every step which Mr. BLAINE takes in politics has reference to his personal ambition to be President of the United States. It is one of the painful consequences of his record that he cannot cast a vote or take sides upon any important question without having the sincerity of his motive disputed. 'He does this thing or that thing,' it is said, 'not because he believes it right, but because he believes that it will win him votes.' ... That is an unfortunate reputation for an ambitious man in public life to have.²¹

Blaine, himself, of course, never admitted any ulterior motive for supporting the Fifteen Passenger Act, but the evidence is overwhelming. In his otherwise skimpy collection of personal papers, Blaine devoted considerable and meticulous attention to gauging reaction to his anti-

Chinese effusions. He carefully preserved in a scrapbook dozens of clippings from newspaper editorials around the country that commented on his new-found sinophobia. No journal was too obscure to escape his notice, from the Auburn (N.Y.) Daily Advertiser (anti) to the Baltimore Presbyterian Weekly (pro), from the Rockford (Ill.) Free Press (pro) to the Vallejo (Cal.) Chronicle (pro). Western newspapers received the most attention. Blaine also preserved numerous speeches and letters by various individuals commenting on his address and a congratulatory telegram from the Governor of Nevada. In a day before public opinion polls, reaction in the press was the closest way to measure popular approval. On no other issue did Blaine track the political effects so assiduously. This alone suggests the impetus behind his actions. The subject of Chinese immigration scarcely ever appears in his correspondence before the winter of 1879. And if he truly cared about Chinese contract labor and forced importation, "Why," asked the New York World, "did not the country hear from Mr. Blaine about this between 1868 and 1875"?"* The answer, quite obviously, was that Blaine did not then consider the issue a vote-getting measure. But he did now. And with the presidency seemingly within his grasp, no position was too low to adopt. As the World noted, "Senator

*In 1875, Congress banned forced importation of contract labor. See chapter 4.

Blaine has made himself the showman in behalf of the anti-Chinese movement...." An unnamed poet put the matter simply:

John Chinaman, my Josh John,
It was a Yankee notion
That you should build our railroads
By the big Western Ocean,
And Sargent then was glad, John,
Your labor was so cheap.
But now he says: The sowing's done,
The whirlwind you may reap.

John Chinaman, my Josh John,
Jem Blaine, in tones terrific,
Pitched to command the suffrages
Next year from the Pacific,
Cries out: 'My friend, the black man,
Knows well I love his race;
But I loathe the voteless aspect
Of a copper-colored face.'²²

[See figures 8.2, 8.3]

James Blaine, of course, was not the only man itching to be president. Two leading contenders for the Democratic nomination sat with him in the Senate: Thomas F. Bayard [D-DE] and Allan G. Thurman [D-OH]. Bayard, scion of a distinguished Delaware family, was the only Democrat south of Pennsylvania with both a national reputation and realistic chance for higher office. "Your course in the present Congress has raised you ... far above that of any other democrat in the country," wrote one observer from Massachusetts. "Many think, as a presidential candidate you would carry the state for the democrats.... [Y]ou are by far the strongest man of the country, in New England." But Bayard, like Blaine, would need more than New England to



THE CIVILIZATION OF BLAINE
JOHN CONSPECTUS. "Am I not a Man and a Brother?"

Figure 8.2. Senator James Blaine hugs the black man who possesses the vote while keeping the Chinese man at arm's length. Note the Chinese man uttering the old abolitionist cry of the slave, "Am I not a Man and a Brother?"

Source: Harper's Weekly, March 8, 1879.

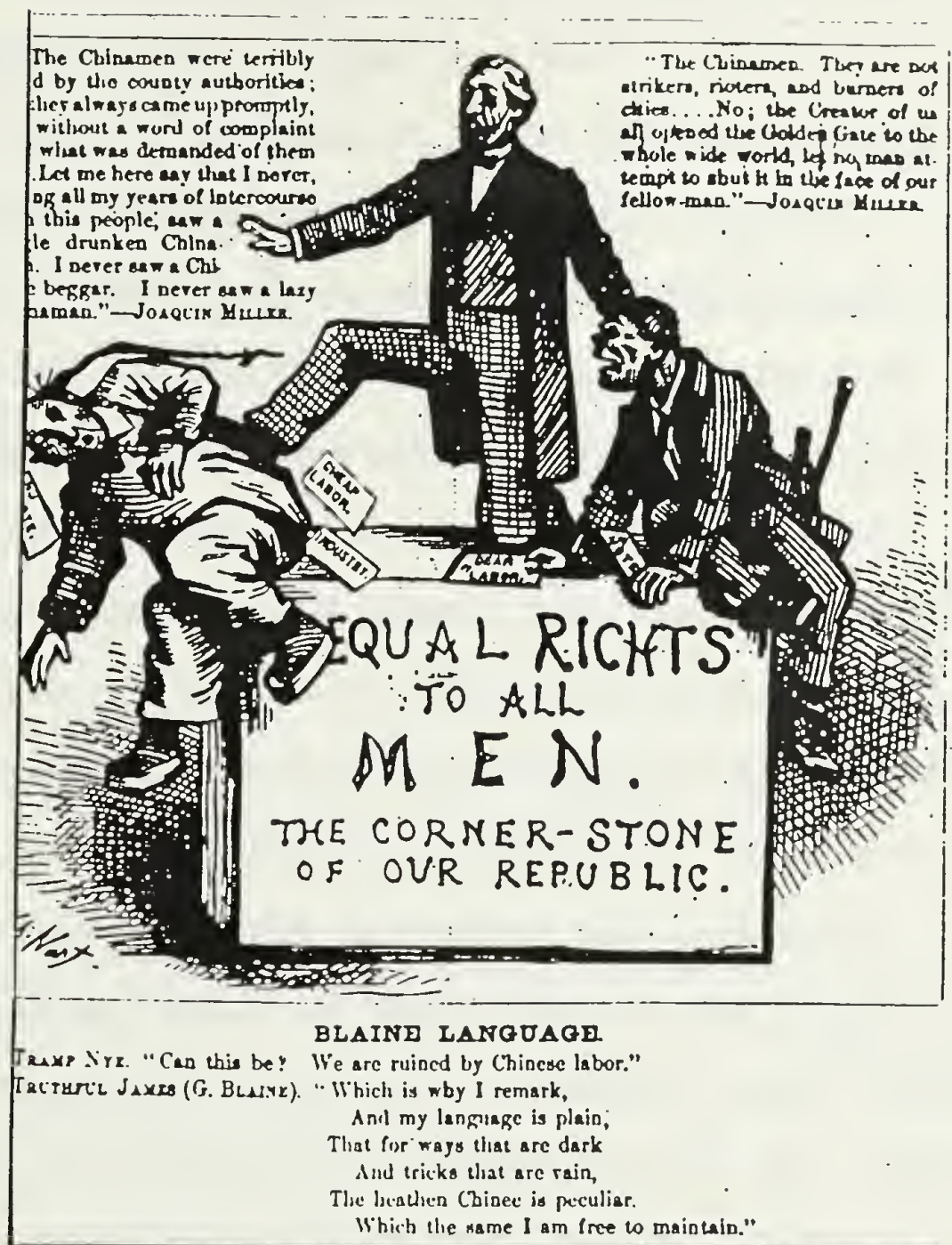


Figure 8.3. Blaine kicks the voteless Chinese man while reaching out for the Irishman who holds a ballot. Note the title, "Blaine Language [from Truthful James]," a pun on "Plain Language from Truthful James," the famous anti-Chinese poem by Bret Harte from 1870.

Source: Harper's Weekly, March 15, 1879.

become president. He too would need the West, and leading Democrats in California urged him to advocate passage of the Fifteen Passenger Act. "The treatment of this question by a Democrat of your prominence," wrote Philip A. Roach, "would help our party in the next Presidential contest." Roach, an advocate of Chinese exclusion for more than twenty-five years, had led California's delegation to the East in 1876 to rally support for immigration restriction. While in Washington he had met privately with Bayard. Now, he reminded the Senator, the stakes had risen--the presidency was on the line. George C. Gorham, he wrote, a former Californian now a high-ranking Republican insider in Washington (and a confidante of Blaine), "will see that the Chinese baby is properly nursed so as to give the Congressional election in this State to the Republicans." As if this weren't bad enough, he added, "Here Kearney has carried off two-thirds of our party by his cry 'the Chinese must go.'" If Democrats were to have any chance of carrying California--and thereby the nation--they had to trumpet the issue loudly. "You are in a position to direct public attention," Roach remarked. "I think you can treat this question in a manner to convince the masses that their relief will be secured only by electing a Democratic President and adhering to Democratic principles." Former Senator Eugene Casserly, who had helped launch the national campaign for Chinese exclusion back in 1870, was more blunt.

"California intensely unanimous for Chinese ... bill," he telegraphed Bayard on the eve of the vote, "hear cry of whole people. Fail us not."²³

Bayard had no intention of failing. He strongly defended the Fifteen Passenger Act, and delivered a brief speech in support. Bayard's rhetoric was by no means as inflammatory as Blaine's, but he favored the bill just the same. "I am a strong believer in blood and race," he had noted recently, "and am convinced that the downfall of a man or nation is near at hand when a disregard for such facts is permitted.... All over this broad land we should watch and combat the stealthy step towards Mongolianism." One staunch partisan recoiled at his position:

that Bayard, a man capable of large views and noble aims should be found ... on the side of the hoodlums & scalawags of the Pacific Coast is more than I can bear. You of all other Democrats ... have been my hope for 1880 and I don't want to feel that you can do a mean thing just for personal political gain.... I did think you were so far above the common kind that you would rather be always right than President.²⁴

Bayard was not the only Democrat who wanted more to be president that right. His colleague Allan Thurman also had his eyes on the White House. This Ohio politician had served in the Senate since 1869 and, like Blaine and Bayard, had scarcely ever uttered a word about Chinese immigration. In one address in 1870 Thurman had acknowledged and endorsed the distinction made by the working classes between immigration and importation. But in 1879 this distinction no longer mattered. The Chinese, he said during the Senate

debate, are not a "desirable population." Chinese immigration, he added, "is a pernicious evil that we want to get rid of." Echoing Blaine, he stated:

We have already three races besides them on this continent, the white race, the black race, and the red man. That is enough. We want no more mixture of such races in this country; but we want time to amalgamate our white people who can amalgamate until they are a homogeneous people. We can go no further than that. I have, therefore, always been in favor of the immigration of white people to this country....²⁵

This sudden embrace of anti-Chinese politics surprised no one. As the New York Times noted, "the Senate is well-known to be painfully overcrowded just now with people who have Presidential aspirations...." The New York Tribune agreed: "political considerations have given tone and bitterness to the controversy. It has been represented as impossible for any party to succeed in the Pacific States, unless it gave countenance to the most extreme measures of hostility to Chinese immigration." Journals irrespective of party formed the same conclusion. "It was perfectly understood by both sides," the Democratic Chicago Times noted, that the bill was "... a bid for the presidential votes of California in 1880.... This is the whole explanation." In a more savage analysis, the New York World deemed the Chinese issue nothing but

a political lever to work with towards the next Presidential contest.... It might be possible, perhaps, for a clever political cynic to invent a more scathing exposure than this ... of the inroads made upon the high theory of American Government by the practices of American politicians. But we doubt it.

A Washington correspondent for the Republican Cincinnati Gazette noted that despite all the oratory heard in Congress, winning Western votes "is, in fact, almost the only argument that has been used in private at any stage of the movement." Seconding the New York World, the Gazette correspondent stated: "There has probably never been a bill before Congress where all the parties interested in pushing it so readily and unblushingly admitted that the reasons addressed to the public were mere claptrap, while the real move was one to secure party supremacy." For Democrats, a Gazette editorial noted, this was par for the course. They had been playing racial politics for years and had never voiced allegiance to higher ideals. But for Republicans to engage in "such baseness" was more than the Gazette could take. "Republicans only roll in the dirt for nothing," the Gazette declared, "when they strive with the Democrats in such dirty work."²⁶ [See figure 8.4]

Not all Republicans rolled in the dirt. A select handful stood up in the Senate and boldly attacked the Fifteen Passenger Act as wrong, racist, and unAmerican. Hannibal Hamlin [R-ME] delivered the keynote address opposing the bill. Almost 70, Hamlin was the oldest Republican in the Senate and one of the very few to have served before the Civil War. As Lincoln's first vice-president, he had been an early advocate of emancipation and a loyal member of the party's radical wing. Defending

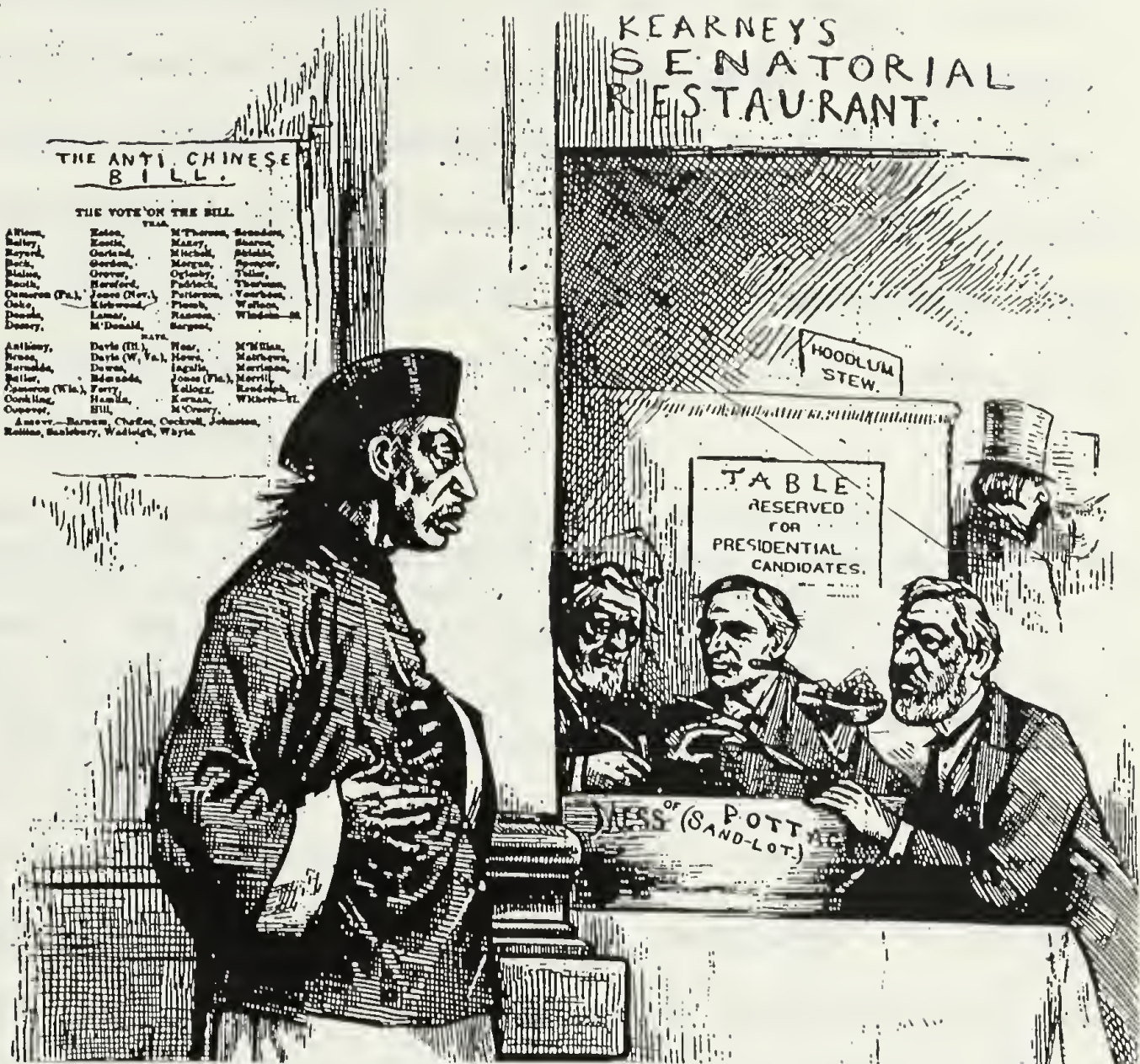


Figure 8.4. At "Kearney's Senatorial Restaurant," senators Thurman, Bayard, and Blaine feast on "hoodlum stew." Like Esau in the Bible, they have sold their birthright--American principles--for a "mess of (sand-lot) pottage." Note that Blaine is taking the biggest mouthful.

Source: Harper's Weekly, March 15, 1879.

Chinese immigration seemed a logical extension of the Republican party's heritage of free soil and equal rights. "I know the power of prejudice," Hamlin said. "I know how it holds with grappled hooks of steel...." Such prejudice must be confronted and overcome to achieve America's promise of "human liberty and the rights of man ... principles deep imbedded in the foundations of our Government." Liberty and equality, he continued, are the

great and fundamental principles coeval with the formation of this Government that have come down to us as traditions of the past, ... and to which I still adhere. Ours was established as 'the home of the free,' where the outcast of every nation, where the child of every creed and of every clime could breathe our free air, and participate in our free institutions....

And now, he asked, after the arrival of a few Chinese, ought these principles, these traditions be reversed? "I am as indifferent to all the danger that shall come away down into the stillness of ages from the immigration of the Chinese. Treat them ... like Christians, and they will become good American citizens." Hamlin's oratory provoked applause from the gallery. "I have convictions upon this question," he said, "and they are deep in my heart."²⁷

Clad in his customary "full dress suit of black" and with his face bearing "faint reminiscent outlines of Webster's," Hamlin's appearance seemed as outdated as his ideals. "I regret that every man of every creed and of every clime may not come here, and obedient to the law ... may not receive its protection," he said. He defended the

Chinese as efficient, industrious workers, stressing that the "best men" of California--"the cool, the deliberate, the Christian portion"--praised the Chinese as "a desirable class of ... laborers." Easterners, he said, ought to listen to these "best men." Hamlin thus urged his colleagues to reconsider their support for legislation they would surely soon regret. "We are hurrying on now to do an act at which I fear in after-time the men who do it will blush, and he who writes the history of the day will read it with amazement and astonishment." Ban the Chinese today, he said, and who will be next? Southern Europeans? Catholics? "I know not where it may end." Hamlin recognized the importance of the bill, and called immigration restriction one of the most "far-reaching" issues ever debated by the Senate. He left no doubt as to where he stood: "I shall vote against the measure, and I leave that vote the last legacy to my children that they may esteem it the brightest act of my life."²⁸

Hamlin was not the only senator to invoke the nation's heritage of open immigration and equal rights. George Frisbie Hoar [R-MA] also made a spirited attack on the Fifteen Passenger Act. This bill, he said, echoing the words of his predecessor Sumner, "violates the fundamental principle announced in the Declaration of Independence upon which the whole institutions of this country are founded, and which by our whole history the American people are

pledged." The great mission of the United States, Hoar declared, is to live out

the truth, that wherever God has placed in a human frame a human soul, that which he so created is the equal of every other like creature on the face of the earth,--equal, among other things, in the right to go everywhere on this globe that he shall see fit to go, and to seek and enjoy the blessings of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness at his own will.

Equal rights, he concluded, had been at the root of the Civil War and were now carved in stone by "the three great amendments to the Constitution blazing like three stars in front of our history...." For most Republicans, whether pro- or anti-Chinese, the lessons of the Civil War and Reconstruction remained the focal point of the debate. Senator Stanley Matthews [R-OH] stated that no one could point to race conflict as a cause of the war: "[it was not] the presence of the black man on this continent that brought in upon us all this woe," he said, "it was his presence here as a slave." The Civil War had taught the nation that the twin evils of slavery and inequality must be abolished. God made all people, Matthews said, "of one blood ... and the same destiny." This included white, black, and Chinese. "[I]s the globe not big enough for us all?" he asked. "If we can live upon the surface of the same earth, what hinders us from living together on the same continent?" Surely American institutions could withstand any threats from the mild-mannered, hard-working Chinese. "Do right;" he concluded, "treat every man, white or black, copper-colored

or whatever, as you would be done by yourself in like circumstances...." Senator Henry L. Dawes [R-MA] emphasized the identical themes. The underlying issue, he said, is "the right of manhood to live and breathe, and walk the surface of the earth, be he a negro or be he a Mongolian." More precisely, it was the right to walk on the surface of the earth within the borders of the United States. This right, Dawes added, belonged to "all humanity, from whatsoever nation it may come...." Opposition to the Chinese, Dawes said, stemmed purely from race prejudice--a prejudice the Republican party stood pledged to eradicate. "The political organization which I am proud to belong to," he concluded, "... was summoned into existence for the very purpose of vindicating the equality of the human race upon this continent in all political rights."²⁹

Passage of a century has dulled neither the passion nor the eloquence of the ideals stated by these senators. Their pleas for racial equality and human rights still shine brightly more than a hundred years later and serve as a testament to the enduring power of ideas (and ideals) to influence people's judgments. A generation schooled in the ideology of republicanism and equal rights could not easily cast this ideology aside when confronted by new problems. The same republican ideology that had inspired emancipation and civil rights served as a basis for defending Chinese immigration. It was no coincidence that Senator Hoar, while

acting as pro tem during part of the debate, invited Senator Blanche K. Bruce [R-MS] to chair the proceedings, marking the first time a black man ever presided over the Senate. In both symbolic acts and national legislation, the cause of racial justice still remained a vital force uniting a remnant of the abolitionist wing of the Republican party. Their tributes to racial tolerance and human equality--especially when contrasted with their opponent's visceral appeal to bigotry and prejudice--provide strong evidence that the nation, or at least a portion of the nation's leaders, had indeed progressed since the days of slavery. And as Senator Hoar remarked, "I do not wish to go back...."³⁰ As noble as these tributes were, however, they do not tell the whole story. A deeper analysis of the position of these Republicans reveals prejudices of a different nature; underneath the umbrella of humanitarianism and equal rights lurked attitudes of indifference and even hostility to the Chinese as well as powerful fears of the working classes.

Senator Hamlin provides a prime example. "I am a little inclined to think," the Republican patriarch said, "that if all the Chinamen in our land had the ballot in their hands to-day we should not have heard a word of this Chinese question here. I think that is a key to a solution of the whole question. I am willing to admit them to naturalization." Despite these avowals, Hamlin had been one

of the leading senators to vote against granting naturalization (and suffrage) to the Chinese nine years earlier in the great Senate debate of 1870. When pressed on this point by Blaine, Hamlin conceded the fact. He had opposed naturalizing the Chinese in 1870, he said, because he feared admitting "another element and another class" who were yet "to be assimilated to us...." Granting citizenship and suffrage to blacks had been difficult, he recalled, and "I thought we might postpone for a limited period when we should bring in the Chinaman and give to him the ballot." In the intervening nine years, however, neither Hamlin nor his colleagues had seen fit to introduce any such measure aimed at enfranchising the Chinese. Such a measure--especially the one in 1870--might indeed have influenced the cause of anti-Chinese politics and prevented forever the consideration of Chinese exclusion. [See figure 8.5] But by 1879 it was too late. By failing to act on their professed ideals during the course of the decade, even these Republicans had belied their party's heritage.³¹

A principled defense of Chinese immigration could often be a thinly-disguised slap at others. Hamlin, for one, attributed the Fifteen Passenger Act "to your Dennis Kearneys and to your unnaturalized Englishmen." Why single out one nationality, he asked, when all immigrant groups have "as much to revolt us as ... the Chinese"? He cited, for instance, the Irish ("unnaturalized Englishmen") and



THIS CHINESE QUESTION WOULD BE SETTLED IF THE CHINESE, CHINESE, WOULD VOTE!! VOTE!! VOTE!!!

Figure 8.5. In 1870 Congress came within a hair of granting naturalization (and suffrage) to Chinese immigrants. Passage of such a measure, as the above cartoon suggests, might have wiped out any prospect of Chinese exclusion.

Source: Puck, March 12, 1879.

"the lazzaroni that swarm the coasts of the Mediterranean." He then acknowledged various shortcomings of the Chinese. He noted "their system of prejudices." He noted their "want of religion." He noted their slowness to assimilate. These were indeed potential problems, and, Hamlin admitted, if the Chinese threatened to cause "imminent peril" and to "overrun our country," he would certainly consider restrictive legislation. Only not yet.³²

While Hamlin defended open immigration he paradoxically also defended Chinese immigration restriction. During his speech, in fact, he trumpeted his own role in furthering the anti-Chinese agenda. As chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, he took personal credit for having drafted the 1878 resolution urging renegotiation of the Burlingame Treaty so as to allow restriction of Chinese immigration. He now urged his colleagues to have "a little ... patience" and let such negotiations proceed. "[I]f we would only wait a fair and reasonable time," he said, "in my judgment we should reach a solution of this question under that resolution that would be satisfactory to our friends on the Pacific slope, as well as to the people of the whole Union." Ideals, evidently, were open to compromise.³³

Hamlin thus stated what was to him the fundamental issue: the Fifteen Passenger Act violated the Burlingame Treaty. Modify the treaty, he said, then pass the law. Otherwise, in violating a treaty, the U.S. would abandon

national honor. "That one party to a treaty can change any part thereof," Hamlin stated, "without the consent of the other, is a proposition so absurd that it would be folly to argue it." Hamlin spent the better part of his speech arguing this point--that treaties were solemn international pacts from which neither party could arbitrarily withdraw. "Who does not believe that if [by passing such legislation] we place unnecessary and harassing restrictions upon the Chinese government, if we violate our plighted faith and national honor to them, they will not ... retaliate upon us?" China, he feared, would then consider the Burlingame Treaty nullified and withdraw completely from its provisions. Hamlin feared the dire effects of such an action on trade. "There is here a great question of commercial intercourse," he said. Under the Burlingame Treaty, exports to China had risen tremendously from \$2 million in 1871 to \$6.9 million in 1878, more than a three-fold increase in less than a decade. Who is to say, asked Hamlin, that if the U.S. limits to fifteen the number of Chinese passengers on each ship from Asia to America, China may not turn around and limit to fifteen the number of barrels of flour on each ship from America to Asia? "Oh, I cannot bear to see a stop put to the untold millions of commerce that shall roll to our shores;" he concluded. "I cannot bear to see that uncounted commerce that shall go from us to them interfered with."³⁴

Money and "national honor"--the two issues became inextricable--lay at the heart of the Republican opposition. Every Republican who spoke against the bill emphasized the Burlingame Treaty as the major stumbling block. Senators Timothy Howe [R-WI], Samuel R.J. McMillan [R-MN], and George Edmunds [R-VT] all cited the treaty as the only obstacle in the path of the bill. They never once mentioned equality, justice, or America's open-door tradition. Nor did Senator Bainbridge Wadleigh [R-NH] who noted that "leading manufacturers" had recently told him (with "great gratification") that the U.S. was gaining more of the cotton market in China at the expense of Great Britain. Overturning the treaty might harm this growing trade.³⁵

Republicans like Hamlin who had mentioned equal rights and the nation's open-door tradition made it plain where their priorities lay. Senator Dawes, for example, while preaching equal rights and equality, stressed the moral and intellectual superiority of "the Anglo-Saxon." Senator Matthews, meanwhile, called the Chinese "pagans and heathens." Restrict them if you will, he said, but do it through the proper channels. Diplomacy, he explained, would "accomplish all the beneficial results" intended by the legislation. Such diplomacy would only take a "few months longer," and spare the nation the prospect of a halt in trade. After all, Matthews concluded, nothing less than "the commerce of this nation is at stake." Senator Hoar was

more explicit. He spoke in great reverence of the Burlingame Treaty "upon which very large commercial and business interests depend. The men of New York, the men of Boston, the men of Philadelphia, the men of Baltimore, and of our other commercial cities, have large interests in the trade with China." In passing this act, he stated, "it is proposed to overthrow by a single blow every right to the commerce which the merchants of the United States have ... with China." Enumerating the reasons he opposed the bill, Hoar emphasized first the violation of the treaty and second the potential harm to commerce. The rights of man came last. "Republicans," Abraham Lincoln had once said, "are for both the man and the dollar, but in case of conflict the man before the dollar." For opponents of the Fifteen Passenger Act of 1879 these two causes--the man and the dollar--still converged neatly but it had become evident that even among the graying abolitionist wing of the Republican party, Lincoln's dictum had been reversed.³⁶

That the Republican opposition was less concerned about limiting Chinese immigration than about overturning a treaty and obstructing trade was further made evident by the methods senators sought to modify the legislation. On February 14, Senator Matthews proposed an amendment that was actually a substitute for the bill. The amendment requested the President to renegotiate the clause of the Burlingame

Treaty that permitted unlimited immigration and if, by January 1, 1880, the President had not submitted the new treaty to the Senate for ratification, the United States would then declare the old treaty void on July 1, 1880. Senator Roscoe Conkling [R-NY] offered a similar but more emphatic amendment. If China refused to revise the treaty's immigration clause--which Conkling labeled "unsatisfactory" and "pernicious"--by the end of the year, the United States would then consider that clause of the treaty void and proceed to pass laws to "regulate or prevent the migration or importation" of Chinese citizens after January 1, 1880. Conkling claimed his amendment was more specific and would abrogate only a single clause rather than the entire treaty. Matthews agreed and withdrew his amendment.³⁷

The Conkling amendment consumed the better part of the debate for the next two days. Senator William W. Eaton [D-CT] criticized its condescending tone, calling it "an absolute, downright threat" and "insult to the Emperor of China." Senator Thurman agreed. The amendment was "rude and offensive," he said. By forcing the Emperor to negotiate, the U.S. was "bullying China." Senator Augustus S. Merrimon [D-NC] took a different view. He opposed the bill, he said, as "an arbitrary invasion of the treaty rights of China." Conkling's amendment, at least, mandated a period of negotiation. Senator David B. Davis [D-IL] agreed. Favoring the amendment, he endorsed a diplomatic

solution to immigration restriction and echoed Matthews in asking: "what harm is there in a short delay?" Senator Edmunds [R-VT] concurred, voicing his "utter abhorrence" to the bill as a whole because it provided for neither notice nor negotiation with a "friendly power."³⁸

Senator Blaine listened to his colleagues in astonishment. The only difference between the bill and the amendment, he said, was timing. Either the United States stops immigration now or tells the Emperor of China that if he doesn't negotiate a new treaty immediately, the United States will stop immigration in a year. The United States was indeed bullying: "shaking the American fist in his face," Blaine said, "'I want you [the Emperor of China] ... to understand that whether you consent or not, we will undertake to declare, through our legislative power that this thing is to be at an end.' ... That is all the difference." Blaine was absolutely right. The only distinction was timing--but to some senators this was crucial. When breaking a contract, said Senate Howe [R-WI], "it is ... far preferable to give a few days of grace" to the other party. This makes for "a politer way ... of reaching that end." Senator Hamlin agreed. The amendment was indeed "politer" and he backed it because it set a definite period--ten months--for negotiation.³⁹

On February 15, the Senate narrowly rejected the Conkling amendment 31 to 34 (with 10 not voting). The

Senate shortly reconsidered the amendment but voted it down again by nearly the same margin, 31 to 33 (with 11 not voting). Politeness, apparently, was not persuasive. The significance of the Conkling amendment lies not in the closeness of the votes but in the substance of the dispute. Senators debated the method of Chinese immigration restriction--legislation v. diplomacy--rather than restriction itself. The ethics of overriding a treaty outweighed the ethics of proscribing an entire race of people from the United States. It was the means and not the ends upon which senators clashed: In the ornate halls of the U.S. Capitol, Republican and Democratic lawmakers had reached consensus in favor of limiting the immigration of the Chinese people.⁴⁰

The final vote was almost an anti-climax. Late in the afternoon on February 15, 1879, the Senate passed the Fifteen Passenger Act with a few minor amendments, 39 to 27 (with 9 not voting). Democrats supported the bill, 21 to 10 (with 6 not voting). Republicans supported the bill, 18 to 17 (with 3 not voting).⁴¹ The Fifteen Passenger Act thus received a bipartisan majority in both houses of Congress. As the Chicago Tribune noted, "Altogether Mr. Denny Kearney has triumphed." [See figure 8.6] On February 22, the House of Representatives approved the Senate version.⁴² Only the President's signature now lay in the way of Chinese immigration restriction. Would Rutherford B. Hayes sign or



THE DEMAGOGUES' TRIUMPH.

Figure 8.6. With the Fifteen Passenger Act in hand, a demagogue stands by the "golden gates" of California locked by Congress against the Chinese. Underfoot lies the treaty broken with a mallet of "bad faith." Behind stands the American version of the Great Wall of China chalked with the names of Blaine and leading senators.

Source: Puck, February 26, 1879.

veto the bill? Over the past year he had given contradictory signals, favoring restriction but preferring a diplomatic approach. As a result no one was sure which way he would go. The last two weeks of February thus became a period of intense lobbying from the press and the people across the country.

The frenetic activity during late February 1879 focused enormous attention on Chinese immigration--the most in fact since North Adams in 1870--and rapidly made the Fifteen Passenger Act the most regionally divisive issue since the Civil War. The West mobilized at once in favor of the bill. "There is not a member of Congress from [the Pacific Coast]," the Washington Star noted near the end of the month, "... who has not in the past three or four days received at least a bushel of telegrams from citizens of his state, ministers, doctors, lawyers, merchants--men of all professions, in fact--urging him to use his every effort to induce the President to sign the bill." The San Francisco Chamber of Commerce backed up this statement: "Never in any community was there more unanimity of opinion than that which prevails on this coast adverse to the inroads of the Chinese. It pervades every class, trade and occupation." The Western press reflected this "unanimity of opinion" and helped rally support for the President's signature. "With the people of this State," the San Francisco Call wrote, "the Chinese question is of paramount importance." The

Virginia City (Nevada) Enterprise agreed. "The bill carries mercies and blessings to generations yet unborn," the Enterprise declared, and called passage of the Fifteen Passenger Act the greatest event "since the day when the guns of rebellion grew still." Politician after politician in the West lined up behind the bill. The governors of California and Nevada urged passage. So did the California Republican State Committee which endorsed the bill unanimously. The Nevada Senate also backed the bill without a dissenting vote as did the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and the Sacramento Board of City Trustees. The California Constitutional Convention interrupted its proceedings to issue a unanimous appeal to Hayes to let the bill become law. Clergymen also jumped into the act. Baptists and Methodists urged approval, and at an ecumenical meeting in San Francisco, Presbyterians, Episcopalians, Catholics, and Jews all united in support of the bill.⁴³

Merchants played a prominent role in this agitation. The San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, Portland Board of Trade, and Oakland Merchants' Exchange all held special meetings to pass resolutions backing the bill. George Perkins, president of the San Francisco Chamber, noted that all 250 members supported the resolution. Perkins then asked the mayor to issue a call for a mass meeting to demonstrate support for the bill. The mayor complied, and on February 27, more than 10,000 Californians gathered to

hear such luminaries as Governor William Irwin, Philip A. Roach, and William T. Coleman (of "pick-handle brigade" fame) denounce Chinese immigration and urge passage of the Fifteen Passenger Act. "The platform seats were occupied by leading merchants and professional men of the city," a New York Herald correspondent noted, "and three-fourths of the audience were composed of substantial citizens, while the working men were largely represented." So much for Hamlin's "best men." A separate meeting earlier in the week had also urged passage although Denis Kearney considered the bill weak and designed only for political purposes. The most extreme statements came not from Kearney or the "hoodlums," however, but from the sober San Francisco Daily Stock Report, the region's oldest financial journal. Failure to sign the bill, the Stock Report stated, could lead California to "sever our connection with the national confederation.... Already such a dread possibility as secession from the union ... is broadly talked of in high circles...." Less than fifteen years after the Civil War, secession remained the most incendiary word in the English language. While Sand-Lotters could be dismissed as demagogues--and the state mocked as "Kearneyfornia"--the venerable and respected San Francisco Daily Stock Report acted as a spokesman for the state's "best men." Preaching secession was a surefire method of gaining the attention of the East and demonstrating to the rest of the nation the

earnestness and unanimity of people on the Pacific Coast.

As a poet for the New York Sun wrote:

We came vociferous from our land auriferous
And filled your ears with our plaintive moan,
But we have failed to see your Eastern sympathy,
So we've decided to go it alone....

We're tired of waiting for your dictating,
For that man Hayes to say Yes or No;
The Chinese question spoils our digestion,
We find your ways too airy and slow;
So now, without a doubt, we'll to the right about
Send every heathen that wears a queue,
Though it's our impression it will take secession
To make you see it in the light we do.

Easterners could wax poetic, but Westerners remained dead serious. During the last two weeks of February, they unleashed every weapon in their arsenal--meetings, resolutions, demonstrations, telegrams, letters, and outright threats of treason--to pressure Hayes to sign the Fifteen Passenger Act.⁴⁴

The reaction in the East stood in total contrast to that in the West. East of the Rocky Mountains the press and the public heaped nothing but abuse on the Fifteen Passenger Act. "[A]lmost without exception," wrote the Washington correspondent for the San Francisco Chronicle, "and utterly regardless of political affinities, the newspapers [east of the Rockies] scout the bill as dishonorable and dishonest...."⁴⁵ Staunch Republican journals called the bill "crude and objectionable," "a discredit and a degradation." Democratic papers reacted with similar outrage. The Brooklyn Eagle condemned the bill's "Know-

Nothing spirit," and, picking apart Blaine's letter paragraph by paragraph, scolded Congress for "pandering to the un-American brutality of the Pacific slope." The New York World called it a "scandalous act" and a "villainy," while the Louisville Courier-Journal denounced the "buncombe bill" as "a weak concession to vagabonds and vagabondage." Belying the common belief that the Irish united behind Chinese exclusion, the New York Irish-American condemned the bill as "un-Democratic" and "a step of the most serious significance taken away from that principle of human brotherhood which is the vital element in popular government." Seldom had Democrats and Republicans appeared so united. According to the Poughkeepsie Eagle, "nine-tenths of the respectable newspapers of both parties" opposed the bill. "Everybody knows," remarked the Springfield Republican, "that politics and not statesmanship is at the bottom of the whole agitation." Perhaps the Cincinnati Commercial put it best: "Congress," it said, "is an ass."⁴⁶

This sudden wave of anti-bill sentiment must not mask a crucial point: it was possible to oppose both the Fifteen Passenger Act and Chinese immigration at the same time. In fact, the arguments marshalled in opposition to the bill demonstrated clearly that Chinese exclusion would ultimately meet with popular approval. The arguments also revealed the nation's retreat from the ideals of the Civil War and

Reconstruction. The Chicago Times opposed the bill but dismissed the equal rights argument as "nonsense" and "antique flummery." And the notion of "America being the refuge of the oppressed of all lands," the Cincinnati Enquirer added, was nothing but "flimsy flapdoodle." Such mockery might have been expected from Democratic organs, but Republicans mouthed similar comments. The influential Chicago Tribune, once a staunch Radical Republican journal, championed the bill and savaged its detractors for clinging to their equal rights ideology--a vestige of their "maudlin, unpractical, dishwater sentimentality." While The Nation attacked the bill as "absolutely indefensible," the eminent weekly made clear that, "In saying all this we are not disposed to pooh-pooh the arguments of Senator Sargent in support of the bill." The Chinese after all, were different and ought to be restricted.⁴⁷

Such was the verdict of virtually every Republican journal regardless of its views on Chinese immigration, equal rights, or the nation's open-door tradition. The Cincinnati Gazette, which hated the Chinese, stood on one extreme. "We have never advocated the unrestricted influx of Chinamen to our shores," the Gazette noted on February 25, 1879. Indeed, the Gazette had long favored Chinese exclusion. In the aftermath of North Adams in 1870, the Gazette had urged a total ban on Chinese immigration and chastised workers for not adopting this position. The

passage of nine years had only hardened the editor's position. The Gazette still considered Chinese immigrants "an evil ... whose infusion lowers the character" of the nation:

We are not, can not be, unmindful of the difficulties resulting from the immigration of a people that can not assimilate with that race which populates the United States. We do not take the ground, because this great country has been proclaimed from the date of the Declaration of Independence to be an asylum for the oppressed of all nations, that therefore it should be open to all people however they might come, or whatever might be their race, condition, religion, or habits.

Despite its loathing of the Chinese, the Gazette condemned the Fifteen Passenger Act as "a stain of dishonor upon our national faith." The legislation would violate the treaty and "unquestionably unsettle all American interests in China." "This hoodlum bill," the Gazette concluded, "is, in a business point of view, the most clumsy and reckless, for it proposes to sacrifice a trade recently recovered by our manufacturers in China, which promised a great increase."⁴⁸

Venerable Republican journals that had long championed equal rights and the nation's open-door heritage ultimately took the same position, if perhaps with a touch more of regret. The New York Tribune acknowledged the unprecedented nature of the legislation. The Fifteen Passenger Act would mark "a reversal of the traditional policy of the United States," the Tribune stated, and "overturn the precedents and belie the principles of the past century." After all,

"We have boasted ... of being an asylum for all races. As such, we have grown great and powerful.... Why should a nation which did not shrink from three millions of negroes, get into a panic over a paltry one hundred thousand Mongolians...?" Why indeed? The Tribune couldn't say. But it clearly did not welcome the Chinese. "The ultimate problem of the Chinese immigration," the journal concluded, "is a most difficult one...." The Tribune acknowledged that Blaine's letter denouncing the Chinese was "clear, concise, admirably stated, full of facts, and amply backed by authorities.... [It] may well challenge the best thought of the country." It certainly challenged the Tribune, which in the end conceded that restriction might eventually be justified, but demanded that it be accomplished "deliberately and decently," rather than in the "cowardly and unmanly fashion" proposed. Again, it was the method that rankled more than the goal. Instead of acting in "hot haste," the U.S. should "comply with the usual diplomatic formalities." The nation's ideals, evidently, like the treaty itself, lay open to modification. And at the root of the issue lay not the man but the dollar. The Burlingame Treaty, the Tribune stated,

is to be abrogated just at a time when American influence seemed about to secure greatly increased advantages for the commerce and industries of this country, and when it seemed not improbable that consumers, many millions in number, would speedily be found for American products, American cotton and cotton goods, American wheat and flour, and American manufactures.⁴⁹

The New York Times, another staunch Republican organ, also condemned the legislation as "needless and dishonorable." Like the Tribune, the Times also paid lip-service to the nation's long-cherished ideals. "The equality in rights of all men is the corner-stone upon which the American Republic rests.... It is to be hoped, for the honor of the Republican Party, as well as for the honor of the nation," that the President would veto the legislation. "[E]nactment of this bill into law," the Times concluded, "would violate all the principles upon which our Government is founded...." Despite this high-sounding rhetoric, the Times expressed few qualms concerning the restriction of Chinese immigration. It called the Chinese "an avaricious people" unlike those "of any civilized country." Their immigration was "objectionable" and filled with "evils." Just in case anyone accused the paper of being pro-Chinese, the editor stated outright that "it is grossly unjust to say that those who have opposed the bill to restrict Chinese immigration necessarily favor, or are indifferent to, the immigration of the Chinese." The Times, in fact, praised the Congressional resolution of 1878 as an "excellent" measure and deemed it "lamentable" that a diplomatic solution to limit Chinese immigration had not been achieved. Such a solution would have been the "proper and courteous way" to keep out the Chinese. An unfortunate consequence of the bill, the Times concluded, would be "a diminution of the

receipts of American ship-owners." As for Chinese immigration itself, "a remedy of some sort should be sought." So much for the equality in rights of all men and the principles of the nation.⁵⁰

With visions of dollars dancing before Republican eyes, the nation's heritage retreated to the periphery. All told, the Fifteen Passenger Act elicited three basic responses in the Republican party. The first response, epitomized by Blaine, emphasized the evils of Chinese immigration and urged immediate restriction. The second response, epitomized by Conkling, acknowledged the evils of Chinese immigration and urged eventual restriction, within a year. The third response, epitomized by Hamlin, questioned the evils of Chinese immigration but stressed treaty and trade as the dominant issues and accepted the need for restriction. Whichever path Republicans chose to walk, the stumbling blocks of equal rights and the nation's open-door heritage appeared as little more than pebbles lying along the wayside. They could be seen but they could be ignored. And they could be trampled upon. The Boston Post put it best:

John Chinaman will not have visited the country for nothing if it proves that he has succeeded in taking down the towering pretensions of the Republican party on the subject of races. All thoughtful men knew it would come sooner or later, and the Mongolian can [now] claim to have fulfilled his mission in the West.⁵¹

The press was the most visible expositor (and shaper) of public opinion but by no means the only one. Business leaders, the clergy, public figures, and state legislators all rushed to make their viewpoints known in an effort to influence the President's decision. Leading merchants in New York and Philadelphia strongly criticized the legislation. William H. Fogg of the China and Japan Trading Company called the bill "'a base act of international treachery'" and a "'slap in the face'" at the Emperor of China. "'We were just beginning to reap the benefits of the treaty,'" said Fogg, who claimed to own more real estate in China than any other American, and "'our domestic goods were just beginning to find a ready and profitable market in China....'" Another merchant involved in the China trade feared Chinese retaliation "would be very detrimental to our commercial interests." The bill "would assuredly work mischief" to the United States in its relations with China, "which was just [now] opening its resources to the competitive industry of the world." Like Fogg, this merchant saw China as a great market for American wares:

Our oil goes there, and our cotton goods are just coming into the China market, with every prospect of growing into a profitable trade. On the rivers of China, which are now being opened, vessels are sailing, manned by Chinamen, but officered by Americans, and now, just when the good results of the Burlingame treaty were unfolding themselves, the American Congress deliberately puts a check upon them.

Merchants, indeed, looked upon the Burlingame Treaty as their treaty, wrung by the United States from a reluctant

nation. "China wanted nothing to do with foreigners," businessmen felt, according to a New York Times reporter who had talked with them, "but the foreigners forced her [China] to fall into line with civilized nations...." The treaty, the businessmen claimed, "sprang from a persistency on the part of the United States which amounted almost to coercion." China merchant Abiel Abbot Low agreed, stating proudly that the treaty had been "proclaimed at the cannon's mouth." In metaphors eerily suggesting rape, Fogg also boasted of the accomplishment. China "never wanted us to invade her territory," he said. "She has been pushing us away all the time, but we have managed to squeeze ourselves in in spite of her." As the New York Times stated, "nearly all of the commercial advantages enjoyed by foreigners in China to-day have been secured by the most energetic diplomatic efforts, backed by shot and shell." The Herald was even blunter: "China has been dragged from her seclusion, commerce has been forced down her throat."⁵²

And now, because of the impulsive and ill-conceived schemes of American politicians, these advantages suddenly seemed in jeopardy. To disseminate their demands more widely, prominent merchants and bankers held an "unusually large and enthusiastic" meeting at the New York Chamber of Commerce on February 27. Organizers included Fogg, Seth Low (merchant A.A. Low's son), Levi P. Morton, and J.P. Morgan. Speakers defended the Chinese, and, although one noted the

"evils connected with [the] immigration ... of that class of cattle," they basically downplayed the alleged dangers. The focus of the meeting, however, remained on the treaty and on trade. All four resolutions concentrated on these concerns while ignoring any reference to the nation's open-door tradition. In a meeting at the Philadelphia Chamber of Commerce, the Maritime Exchange sent the identical message. "The resolutions were to the effect that ... it was the paramount duty of the government to fulfill sacredly each and every of its treaties with foreign Powers. The principle consideration ... against the bill was that the interests of trade and commerce of the United States would thereby be greatly imperilled." Just as workers had been motivated by their own economic interests to urge a ban on imported contract labor, so merchants were motivated by their economic interests against a threatened loss of trade. As one merchant warned: "The one hope for the salvation of American commerce with China lies in the Presidential veto."⁵³

Most of the nation's religious leaders echoed the call of capital in fearing the effects of a violated treaty. They cared less about saving commercial rights, however, than they did about saving souls. As the Baltimore Methodist noted, passage of the bill would "seriously interfere with missionary operations in the Celestial Empire, now in so hopeful a condition." Eastern ministers

of numerous faiths--Baptists, Methodists, Episcopalians--gathered to denounce the bill, fearing that the act would only impede the conversion of Chinese to Christianity. Henry Ward Beecher, the nation's most prominent pastor, also opposed the act. Sounding more like a merchant than a minister, however, Beecher stressed the nation's honor and international obligations. "We have enforced the opening of China by treaties," he said, "by invading it and hacking Chinamen to pieces with the sword; we conquered from them their commercial tribute...." And now all these efforts would be for naught. Beecher did not defend the Chinese "from any personal liking for them," he said; rather, he attacked the bill to prevent "plac[ing] you and me and our posterity in the position of treaty-breakers...." A few ministers dissented from the church's position and cited the familiar grounds of Chinese immorality and irreligion. The majority, however, aligned with both the press and capital and urged a veto.⁵⁴

A variety of public figures also spoke out against the bill. Henry Highland Garnet, president of the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, recommended a veto. So did the iconoclastic George Francis Train and the venerable Theodore Woolsey, former president of Yale. Thurlow Weed, then in his 82nd year, defended the Chinese and called the bill a violation of "our [nation's] life-long professions and principles." S. Wells Williams, a noted scholar of the

Orient who had served twenty-one years as Secretary of the U.S. Legation in China, also opposed banning immigrants from China, but added, "I myself should not like to have them come in droves...." Most prominent Americans east of the Rocky Mountains eagerly voiced their opinions on the matter and, for one reason or another, urged Hayes to veto the bill.⁵⁵

Local legislators presented a more ambiguous picture as the Chinese issue reverberated in state houses across the nation. In Illinois, state senators voted 18 to 16 to urge Hayes to sign the bill. Ohio lawmakers also favored the bill. Voting 28 to 43 largely along party lines, they rejected a Republican resolution stressing "this reckless assault upon the commercial honesty, national honor and good faith of the United States Government." The New Jersey Assembly rejected a similar resolution, 24 to 28, but both parties divided on the vote. In Connecticut, however, lawmakers opposed the bill adamantly. Only one Connecticut state representative, a Republican, defended the bill, but he abstained and allowed a resolution denouncing the bill to pass unanimously.⁵⁶ Connecticut state senators also passed the resolution without a dissenting vote, and the Rhode Island Senate followed suit the next day. What are we to make of these inconsistent results? Although far from conclusive, the votes suggest that, regardless of party, anti-bill sentiment was strongest in the Northeast and

tended to dissipate as one moved west. Perhaps more significant, they showed that the press (largely anti-bill), local politicians (mixed), and national politicians (pro-bill) could be at cross-purposes. Gauging public opinion from such contradictory evidence is indeed tricky, and defies generalization. At the very least the evidence reveals that public opinion was not monolithic and certainly not passive. Whether in editorials, trade circles, sermons, speeches, or state houses, the Fifteen Passenger Act sparked controversy as groups and individuals competed to reach the President's ear. Everyone seemed eager to make his views known.⁵⁷

Everyone, that is, except the working classes. As the Fifteen Passenger Act wended its way through Congress during the first two months of 1879, workers and labor leaders remained actively engaged in organizing and agitating issues of immediate importance. In late January, socialists held a wave of coordinated demonstrations from Boston to Chicago to protest the suppression of civil rights in Germany. Count Otto von Bismarck, the German Chancellor, had recently cracked down on political opposition and forced many socialists underground. Others he exiled from the country. In city after city, American socialists gathered to protest these actions. In English, German, French, and Bohemian, orators denounced Bismarck and Emperor William and presented resolutions calling upon Congress and the President to send

formal protests to the German government. The 3,000 people who filled Chickering Hall in New York City endorsed the resolutions with near unanimity, an occasion that gave rise to one of the evening's lighter moments. "'Those who approve the Bismark despotism will say so,'" the chairman said. One voice cried out in favor, prompting the chairman to respond: "'If my name were Denis Kearney, I should say there were 75,000 people here, and all but one are on the right side.'" Applause and laughter followed. Kearney, needless to say, had become a source of ridicule. But of greater significance is the fact that the presumably working-class issue he championed--Chinese exclusion--never once came up for debate during the meeting in New York, nor, according to existing reports, in any other of the meetings across the country. The Fifteen Passenger Act remained conspicuously absent from the working-class agenda. Such absence can be easily explained: the bill, after all, was still in committee in late January, and besides, the protest meetings were devoted not to domestic but to foreign affairs.⁵⁸

In February this was no longer the case. Coincidentally, another important bill came up for consideration in Congress the same month: a measure to abolish tenement-house labor in the cigar industry. Tenement-house labor, it may be recalled, had sparked the great cigar-makers' strike in October 1877. The following

year cigar makers succeeded in getting the United States Senate to tack on an anti-tenement house measure to a lengthy revenue bill just introduced. Adolph Strasser, president of the Cigar Makers' International Union, urged an all-out effort to get this measure passed, and union members responded enthusiastically. Boston cigar makers, for example, appointed a delegation in January 1879 to lobby local Congressmen to support the bill. In February the Senate Finance Committee approved the measure unanimously and sent it to the full Senate. Cigar makers stepped up their campaign at once to lobby for passage. On February 11 they held a mass meeting in New York to urge both the Senate and House to adopt the measure. They also sent out circulars to enlist the aid of "all workingmen's societies and humane people." To further rally support they held a second mass meeting four days later. The Boston Central Trades and Labor Union responded instantly. Workers in the Hub urged agitating "public opinion" on the horrors of tenement-house labor, and the organization dispatched letters to each Massachusetts representative and senator demanding passage of the bill. Support poured in from all over. The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, located in Cleveland, endorsed the measure and urged Congress to pass it. So did the Granite Cutters International Union in Maine and the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers in Pittsburgh. Union president Adolph Strasser himself then

took a trip to Washington in the middle of the month to personally lobby senators.⁵⁹

This mass effort on the part of organized labor failed. On February 18, three days after approving the Fifteen Passenger Act, the Senate rejected the anti-tenement-house measure. Howls of protest erupted in working-class circles. At a mass meeting in New York thousands of workingmen and women flocked to Cooper Union to express their indignation. "The large hall was filled," one journal reported, "and the gathering was probably the largest ever held by the cigarmakers in New York." Louis Berliner set the tone of the meeting when he declared

every Senator who voted against the amendment committed a crime, and I wonder that they can hold up their heads and look unabashed into the faces of their fellow-men. In voting as they did they announced themselves in favor of one of the worst systems of slavery that exists.... If I were a judge, and those Senators could be brought before me for sentence, I would doom them to live and work in a tenement-house the whole of their natural lives. (Cheers of 'Good! good!') Yes, my friends, I wish I could have the power to make these men, who have refused to enact a wise and just law for our benefit, taste the evils of the damnable tenement-house system. (Prolonged applause.)

Other workers compared tenement-house labor to slavery, rife with exploitation and 18-hour workdays. Tailor Conrad Carl attacked the system as "one of the greatest abuses of the age." And Samuel Gompers himself stated: "'We are men and women who have rights which must be defended. Oppression such as we experience has in former ages caused rebellion and warfare.... Human nature cannot, and will not, endure

abuse which goes beyond the dictates of conscience and humanity.'" After similar speeches in German and Bohemian, workers endorsed four resolutions harshly denouncing "the nefarious tenement-house system." They demanded its immediate abolition and pledged to transmit a copy of their grievances to the President of the United States and each house of Congress.⁶⁰

New Yorkers were not alone in condemning the Senate action. Cigar makers held equally vehement meetings in Buffalo, Boston, Hoboken, Brooklyn, and Detroit. They too described the evils of tenement-house labor and the miserable working conditions it fostered. Like cigar makers in New York, they implored Congress to pass the legislation and urged the House of Representatives to take immediate action. To see to these demands, President Strasser remained in Washington to lobby lawmakers. He again met with members of Congress to plead his case. Despite all these myriad efforts, Congress failed to act. The anti-tenement-house measure remained unpassed. A desultory Strasser returned to New York.⁶¹

The significance (to us) of this episode is not that the measure failed but that cigar makers swiftly mobilized across the East and Midwest in February 1879 to agitate for the passage of a federal law in their interests. They held meetings, publicized their demands, and even sent a lobbyist to Washington. They also roused wage-earners in other

trades, from railroad engineers to granite cutters to steelworkers, who quickly rallied to their aid. And, yet, amid all this agitation and all these strenuous efforts, the Fifteen Passenger Act never came up for consideration. Although cigar makers could easily have injected a reference to it at any of their numerous meetings--and words, after all, are cheap--not a single one mentioned it. Although Strasser could have put in a brief word in its favor to Congress or the President, no evidence exists to suggest that he did. Nor was Strasser the only working-class lobbyist in Washington at the time. Samuel C. Hunt, head of the Boston Navy Yard workers, was also in the nation's capital in February actively urging Congress to enact a new eight-hour law. Another working-class group pressuring Congress was the Brotherhood of Labor, which lobbied for passage of a new homestead act introduced by Ben Butler. Still another working-class group urged passage of a land reform bill sponsored by Representative Hendrick C. Wright. Workers evidently had a broad political agenda during the winter of 1879 that embraced such disparate issues as tenement-house labor, the eight-hour day, and a new homestead act. And yet in all the speeches and all the accounts, all the lobbying and all the agitation, one issue was missing: Chinese immigration. Although grabbing headlines and causing tumult nationwide, the Fifteen Passenger Act remained conspicuous for its near absence in

working-class circles. In labor meeting after labor meeting during the key weeks of early 1879--from coopers in Illinois to hatters in New Jersey to workingmen's councils in Boston, Brooklyn, Chicago, and around the country--the issue failed to surface.⁶²

But not completely. Existing evidence indicates that the issue came up exactly twice among workers east of the Rockies. On February 23, the Cincinnati Trades and Labor Association held a special meeting and endorsed the Fifteen Passenger Act. Workers revealed serious misgivings, however, at the bill's failure to tackle the issue of importation. The act would give a "small measure of relief ... to the workingmen of California," they noted, "while providing no remedy for the outrage which has been perpetrated...." The bill was at best a piecemeal proposition. The National Workingmen's Association in Washington, D.C., also endorsed the bill. Having never said a word about the legislation as it passed from Committee to the full House and then to the Senate, the N.W.A. at last urged the President to sign the bill "in the interest of peace and good government ... as it is the only means that will prevent a terrible calamity and the annihilation of the Chinese on the Pacific coast...." Thus two working-class organizations did indeed take a stand in favor of the Fifteen Passenger Act. But hardly with the vigor or venom voiced by so many others across the country. To the mass of

American workers, Chinese immigration remained a side-issue at best.⁶³

The labor press reflected this general indifference. The Cigar Makers' Official Journal, presently consumed with the tenement-house bill, ignored the Fifteen Passenger Act. So did the National Labor Tribune which said scarcely a word on the bill. The Paterson Labor Standard was even more tight-lipped. "The passage by the Senate of the Chinese Anti-Immigration bill has given great satisfaction on the Pacific slope," the paper noted. "It is rumored that Hayes will veto the anti-Chinese bill." This was the extent of the Labor Standard's editorials on the subject. "Workman, be alive, do your duty, do it well, and do it at once," the Standard declared, as it urged "all our readers, upon the Trades and Labor Unions, and the Labor press to bring a moral pressure upon the United States Congress"--but this was in behalf of the anti-tenement-house measure, not the Fifteen Passenger Act. As one critic noted in late January, "The Labor Standard takes great offense at the sentence: 'The Chinese must go.'" The Chicago Socialist, on the other hand, voiced support for the bill, but in so doing said virtually nothing on Chinese immigration. As a recent editorial had stated, socialist "agitators ... are not obliged to wage a warfare against races ... in agitating the anti-Chinese cause. It is the infamous system that permits the importation of Coolies (slaves) and the importers of

them that we contend against. This explanation we deem necessary in order to prevent mistakes."⁶⁴

Patrick Ford, editor of the rechristened Irish World and American Industrial Liberator, took a similar stand. "It is truly a pitiable sight," he wrote, "to see grave and reverend Senators ... loading their debates with race-bigotry.... The question of ethnological superiority or inferiority does not come into the subject at all." Ford backed the bill but decried the race-baiting. "We recognize in the Chinaman a brother," he declared,

and we are not opposed to him because he is a Chinaman, but because, in the hands of soulless men, he is becoming a means of pushing Labor back into a state of serfdom. If it were possible to find any number of Irishmen or Englishmen or Germans so lost to self-respect as to enter into a contract to emigrate to this country and live in the same manner and work on the same terms as the Chinese live and work, we should be just as outspoken in our opposition to such Irish or English or German immigration as we are now to this Coolie labor.... Let the Chinese come hither, if they will; let men of all climes come; but let them not come to compete with the American workman. Let them come to develop the sleeping resources of the country.⁶⁵

Even with the government on the brink of passing the Fifteen Passenger Act the labor press continued to frame the issue around importation rather than immigration. It was the nature of the immigration and not the nationality that mattered.

In assessing working-class attitudes toward Chinese immigration--and the role workers played in Chinese exclusion--it is essential to differentiate between working-class opinion and perceptions of working-class opinion.

Judging working-class opinion itself is fraught with danger, for labor seldom spoke with a unified voice. A few of these voices, as noted, sang out in support of the Fifteen Passenger Act, but from the great chorus of workers came a deafening silence. At the very moment of peak interest in Chinese immigration restriction workers responded with one great yawn. As the first immigration restriction act sailed through Congress in 1879 workers expended little wind to help it through. A few observers commented on this working-class indifference. "If the working people of this country realized their great danger--" the Cincinnati Enquirer remarked in December, "if they appreciated the real peril which hangs over them and their homes--they would compel the politicians to take speedy and vigorous action...." The key word in this sentence was "if," the use of which implied that workers did not realize the so-called "dangers" or appreciate the "perils" of Chinese immigration. To the dismay of the Enquirer, workers were not compelling politicians to take action. Passage of a month gave the anti-Chinese journal little cause for optimism. "The workingmen of Australia are wiser than those of the United States," the Enquirer noted. "They are forming Anti-Chinese Leagues, and inaugurating a general crusade against the employment of Chinese." Why, the Enquirer wondered, were American workers so apathetic? As the San Francisco Chronicle remarked, "They [the workingmen] are just

beginning to study the problem in the east."⁶⁶ Anti-Chinese activists made the same observation. "How much persuasion is necessary," asked an anti-Chinese correspondent for the Socialist who had lived in the West for fourteen years, "... to induce the New England workingman to interest himself about the Chinese question?" Apparently, a great deal more. Sadly, the correspondent concluded, "working people are so extremely dull and slow." More accurately, they simply did not care. They revealed little desire to embrace anti-immigration legislation or practice the politics of racism. As Greenback leader Solon Chase colorfully noted, Blaine "tried to make the 'Heathen Chinees' an issue. All of which went to show that Blaine was 'barking up the tree on which there was no coon.'"⁶⁷

Thomas J. Morgan said much the same thing. During an investigation by the Illinois legislature in early March on the needs of the working classes, lawmakers called laborers, union leaders, and socialists to testify. Although the Fifteen Passenger Act had passed in the Senate just two weeks earlier, not a single worker raised the subject of Chinese immigration. At last a lawmaker prodded Morgan, a machinist and glass finisher and leader of the Chicago Trade and Labor Council, to tell him what he thought of the Chinese issue. "[T]he Chinese," replied Morgan, caught off guard by the question, "should have the same right to come here as any other nationality...." He added, however, that

their habits and standard of living ought to be raised to a higher level. But whatever the outcome, he said, "the whole affair had been given a greater importance than it deserved."⁶⁸

The working classes evinced little interest in Chinese immigration and the Fifteen Passenger Act, but just as with Kearney's tour in 1878, a crucial distinction existed between working-class opinion and perceptions of working-class opinion. The Cincinnati Enquirer illustrated this distinction neatly. Although this rabidly pro-exclusion journal had just bemoaned workers' lack of awareness on the issue, the Enquirer nonetheless concluded that the Fifteen Passenger Act "is a measure in the interest of the working classes." Although Morgan stated in his testimony that "the matter had been treated ... more as a political question," the Enquirer claimed: "The bill can in no sense be considered a political measure." The Enquirer supported the bill, believed the bill was in workers' interests, and assumed workers would want it--even when they did not. "It is high time," the Enquirer exclaimed in late February, "that the workingmen, the class most nearly affected by Chinese cheap labor, were taking action in their own defense." If only they were.⁶⁹

The New York Tribune took the same approach, and took it a step further. Not only did the Tribune assume that workers supported the bill, it then blamed the entire

opposition to Chinese immigration on "such persons as seek through trades-unions and organized strikes to create an antagonism between labor and capital.... This opposition has not been shown generally by persons of American birth." The Tribune blamed anti-Chinese sentiment on European immigrants, or, more precisely, the Irish and "the ignorant." So did the Cleveland Herald which argued that the legislation originated not with politicians but "with a class of men who are themselves foreigners...."⁷⁰ This attitude meshed neatly with Hamlin's assertion in the Senate that "unnaturalized Englishmen"--i.e., the Irish--were the ring-leaders of the anti-Chinese movement. It also reinforced Blaine's contention that the bill was being passed to satisfy "the free American laborer." Politicians and the press converged in presenting and distorting working-class demands. Then, in the hopes of gaining votes, politicians coopted this distorted demand as their own. Even though few workers had ever voiced such a demand, national politicians now advocated shutting the doors to Chinese immigrants in workers' names. And the press, which for the most part opposed the Fifteen Passenger Act, basically sympathized with immigration restriction. A handful of workers, meanwhile, went along, but the great majority simply looked the other way.

What, in the end, are we to make of these mixed messages and bizarre machinations? Were all the words

tossed about simply part of an elaborate charade among politicians, editors, and workers? Perhaps, but the unexpected verbal gymnastics stimulated by the Fifteen Passenger Act were more than mere illusions: they were the essence of politics in the Gilded Age. Words became potent weapons, which if repeated--or twisted--enough could disarm the opposition. And who controlled the words and their popular meaning? Not workers. Not labor leaders. Their actual words seldom penetrated to a larger audience. Rather, they were distilled through a press that could refine their language and define their meaning. No one, after all, could really be certain what "the people" wanted. The press became the funnel for virtually all new ideas, and in its position as transmitter, expounder, and arbiter, editors, in conjunction with politicians (for most papers were party organs), held sway over the new public dialogue. They could design issues, define issues, alter issues, and eliminate issues. The debate over the Fifteen Passenger Act and Chinese immigration reveals the extraordinary power of the press in the Gilded Age.

Such power was not new. As Ronald Formisano has shown, the press had become a dominant political force as early as the 1830s. Newspapers became party boosters, "prosletyzing agents," and "a new kind of public-address system to supporters" in the Jacksonian era, Formisano has written. "Historians have sometimes treated newspapers as if they

reflected public opinion, and while at times this might have been so, editors and politicians often worked deliberately to create opinion. Usually newspapers did not reflect public opinion so much as they reflected the determined efforts of inner circles within parties to shape and direct opinion." The debate over the Fifteen Passenger Act a generation later reveals how tremendously the force of newspapers had grown. The press skillfully reduced complex issues to mere phrases and catchwords. By focusing purely on immigration, newspapers reframed the entire Chinese question. As a consequence, working-class demands never received genuine attention. The original concern raised by workers--importation--had been yanked from workers' hands and transformed into something vitally different. Workers lost control of the issue because they didn't have the power to control the meaning of the words they used. This power had shifted to an expanding national media which, in an increasingly broad, diverse, and depersonalized society, had become the dominant force connecting people to their world. The press, along with politicians who received massive coverage, set the parameters of public debate. Nothing so much defined the politics of the Gilded Age as the convergence of press and politicians in setting the national agenda by deciding which issues would be discussed and which issues would not be. Most importantly, they determined how these issues would be discussed. The debate over Chinese

exclusion reveals how politicians could manipulate issues for their own benefit and how the press, with their own needs and biases, permitted them to get away with it. The politics of the Gilded Age laid the groundwork for the present era.⁷¹

And what, finally, of the Fifteen Passenger Act itself? The White House had long since indicated its support for restricting Chinese immigration. At a widely-publicized Cabinet meeting on January 3, when the bill was still in committee, Hayes and his Secretaries discussed the issue at length. The majority of the Cabinet--Secretary of State William M. Evarts, Secretary of War George W. McCrary, Secretary of the Navy Richard W. Thompson, and Postmaster General David Key--recommended limiting Chinese immigration. Most, in fact, urged limiting all immigration, agreeing "that immigration of all kinds had been overdone in this country, and that in the future it would be a good policy to discourage it from all sources...." Only Attorney General George Devens spoke in favor of the Chinese. Finally, after considering various options, the President, with the support of his Cabinet, instructed Secretary of State Evarts to "open formal negotiations with the Chinese government for modification of the Burlingame Treaty, with a view to placing restrictions upon Chinese immigration to this country."⁷²

The Executive Branch, in other words, had chosen to limit Chinese immigration through diplomatic channels. But just as Evarts began contacting the Chinese Minister, Congress rushed ahead with the Fifteen Passenger Act and threw the White House into a dither. Uncertain what to do, Hayes called another Cabinet meeting. His advisers urged him to veto the bill. Evarts played the most prominent role. Although the Secretary of State favored the restriction of Chinese immigration--which he described as an "invasion rather than an immigration"--he warned that the bill "was clearly a breach of faith" on the part of the United States. The bill would embarrass the nation, Evarts believed, threaten commerce, and undercut the authority of the Executive Branch. Evarts and fellow Cabinet members reflected the views of the Republican press at large.⁷³

Hayes took the advice to heart. "Both houses have passed a bill intended to prevent the Chinese from coming to this Country in large numbers," the President confided to his diary on February 20.

I am satisfied the present Chinese labor invasion--(it is not in any proper sense immigration--women and children do not come) is pernicious and should be discouraged. Our experience in dealing with the weaker races--the negroes and indians for example is not encouraging. We shall oppress the Chinamen, and their presence will make hoodlums of their oppressors. I therefore would consider with favor measures to discourage the Chinese from coming to our shores. But I suspect that this bill is inconsistent with our treaty obligations. I must carefully examine it. If it violates the national faith I must decline to approve it.

A week later the President added that the Chinese population was "hateful" and "cannot safely be admitted into the bosom of our American Society." The distance between the Sand Lots and the White house was far shorter than anyone cared to acknowledge.⁷⁴

While the President pondered the issue in his diary, the storm over the Fifteen Passenger Act swirled across the country. Letters, telegrams, and petitions poured into the White House from all over. The President, one newspaper noted, "has received more advice, with reference to the action he should take on the bill, than upon any subject that has yet come before him.... The only opposition to a veto comes from the Pacific Coast...." Leaning toward a veto but still undecided, Hayes called Evarts to visit him for one last consultation. He also invited James Garfield. The Ohio Congressman, one of the most powerful Republicans in the House, came at once. The three of them "had a full conversation" about the Fifteen Passenger Act, Garfield later wrote. Sentiment against the bill, he remarked, was "growing very strong." To the President, Garfield stressed the "iniquity of its provision," and, seconding Evarts, urged him to veto the bill. The meeting then adjourned.⁷⁵

Garfield, Evarts, and the response of Republicans across the country ultimately determined the President's action. On March 1, 1879, Rutherford B. Hayes vetoed the Fifteen Passenger Act. In his veto message (actually

drafted by Secretary of State Evarts), the President objected to the bill for all the familiar reasons. It would unconstitutionally abrogate the Burlingame Treaty, threaten American "merchants or missionaries" in China, and "endanger ... the growing commerce and prosperity" of the two nations. With the treaty overturned, Hayes feared the loss to "our ... industries, our manufactures, our material improvements and the sentiments of government and religion which seem to us so important to the welfare of mankind." Trade and treaty rights dominated the President's message. Only once in his three-thousand-word statement did Hayes pay lip service to human rights, equality, or justice. He cited "the American doctrines of free migration to and fro among the peoples and races of the earth," and even conceded: "Up to this time our uncovenanted hospitality to immigration, our fearless liberality of citizenship, our equal and comprehensive justice to all inhabitants, whether they abjured their foreign nationality or not, our civil freedom and our religious toleration had made all comers welcome...." But in acknowledging these ideals, Hayes felt free to shove them aside. Chinese immigration, after all, was a serious problem, and "the very grave discontents of the people of the Pacific States ... deserv[e] the most serious attention of the people of the whole country...." Criticizing the bill, Hayes recommended "more careful methods" be used--such as negotiating a new treaty--to keep

the Chinese out. By using such methods, he said, the U.S. could protect "ourselves against a larger and more rapid infusion of this foreign race than our system of industry and society can take up and assimilate with ease and safety." It was the means of Chinese exclusion and not the ends to which the President objected.⁷⁶

The Fifteen Passenger Act marked a critical turning point in the anti-Chinese movement. Although the bill went down to defeat, the debate revealed that the days of unrestricted Chinese immigration were numbered. Only a legal technicality--a treaty--lay in the way, and no one voiced any reservations about its modification. Defending the Chinese had ceased to be popular. "There can be no feeling amounting to enthusiasm or aggressiveness aroused in favor of the Chinese," the Cincinnati Enquirer noted. The political consequences of this fact were crucial. "The feeling in favor of the Chinese will not help carry a State any-where. The States that lie east of the Rocky Mountains that are Republican will remain so, Chinese or no Chinese. The Chinese question will neither hurt nor help in any of those States; but it will hurt in California, Oregon and Nevada...." Therein lay the reason for Chinese exclusion. Scarcely any Americans east of the Rocky Mountains actively urged Chinese exclusion--but this fact hardly mattered. In a national political system almost perfectly balanced

between the two major parties, a single issue and a single state could mean the difference between victory and defeat. No one knew this better than the nation's most powerful Republican who shrewdly seized the issue, hoping it would catapult him into the White House. And with virtually no Chinese voters and few Chinese sympathizers Senator Blaine had taken an astute political gamble. Overnight he became the most influential person in the nation to endorse Chinese exclusion. His embrace of the politics of racism made Chinese exclusion acceptable. "Blaine's letter on the Chinese has changed the tune of denunciation among the Republicans in this vicinity," one New England journal noted. "They have more respect for Blaine's position."⁷⁷

Blaine, indeed, made Chinese exclusion respectable. But he did not make it inevitable. Many Republicans, after all, criticized Blaine and opposed the Fifteen Passenger Act. "Senator Blaine has made a great mistake in his advocacy of it," wrote James Garfield in his diary on February 24. "At the same time," the future president added, "I am anxious to see some legislation that shall prevent the overflow of Chinese into this country." Only when solid conservatives like James Garfield, Rutherford B. Hayes, and William M. Evarts voiced such sentiments did Chinese exclusion become inevitable. Only when scores of Republicans across the country echoed these opinions did Chinese exclusion become a fait accompli. By attacking the

bill for its violation of a treaty and not for its violation of human rights and justice, Republicans had pretty much conceded the issue. And when graying abolitionist senators such as Hannibal Hamlin devoted the bulk of their energies to defending the rights of commerce rather than the rights of the Chinese, little doubt remained as to which direction the country was heading. People could rightfully accuse Blaine of playing politics. They could just as rightfully accuse the Republican party of abandoning its ideals. Equal rights and racial justice no longer served to unify its members. The collapse of Reconstruction sent most Republicans scurrying from their "maudlin, unpractical, dishwater sentimentality." The party that had once fought for emancipation and the inclusion of blacks into the American political system now took a commanding role in exploiting racial tensions and endorsing the exclusion of the Chinese from the United States. In so doing, the Republican party ultimately made Chinese exclusion inevitable. The irony of this turnaround did not go unnoticed. "A few years ago," remarked the Daily Advance, an obscure working-class journal out of Cleveland, "when labor reformers demanded the prohibition of the IMPORTATION of Chinese laborers (not their free immigration mind you) a howl went up in the columns of the monopoly press from one end of the country to the other...." And now immigration

restriction had become all the rage in Congress. "Well,"
the Advance concluded, "the world does move."⁷⁸

NOTES

1. Theron Clark Crawford, James G. Blaine. A Study of His Life and Career from the Standpoint of a Personal Witness of the Principle Events in His History (Edgewood Beales, 1893), p. 23; George F. Hoar, Autobiography of Seventy Years, I (New York: Scribners, 1903), p. 200; New York Herald, Feb. 15, 1879, p. 4. Stevens quoted in Donald Barr Chidsey, The Gentleman from New York: A Life of Roscoe Conkling (New Haven: Yale, 1935), pp. 40-41.

2. Eric Foner, Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877 (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), pp. 467, 468; Chandler quoted in David Saville Muzzey, James G. Blaine, A Political Idol of Other Days (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1934), p. 155; Blaine quoted in Richard Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It (New York: Vintage, 1948), p. 176; James A. Garfield, Diary, April 14, 1880 (Garfield Papers, Library of Congress); The Nation, March 6, 1879, p. 160; New York Times, April 15, 1884, quoted in John G. Sproat, "The Best Men": Liberal Reformers in the Gilded Age (New York: Oxford, 1968), p. 119; Crawford, James G. Blaine, pp. 36-37.

No politician of the Gilded Age is more deserving of a modern biography than James G. Blaine. The paucity of his private papers has no doubt deterred many scholars. Along with a slew of campaign biographies written in 1884, sympathetic accounts of the "plumed knight" include Crawford, James G. Blaine; Gail Hamilton, Biography of James G. Blaine, 1895; Edward Stanwood, James Gillespie Blaine (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906); and Muzzey, James G. Blaine, A Political Idol. For a more critical account, see Charles Edward Russell, Blaine of Maine (New York, 1931).

3. Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 2nd sess., p. 318 (Jan. 14, 1878); ibid., 45th Cong., 3rd sess., pp. 447 (Jan. 14, 1879), 791-92 (Jan. 28, 1879). The first version of the bill had limited the number of Chinese passengers to ten and the effective date was Sept. 1, 1878.

4. The report appears in Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., p. 793 (Jan. 28, 1879).

5. For Page's speech, see ibid., pp. 795-98 (Jan. 28, 1879).

6. For Willis's speech, see ibid., pp. 798-99 (Jan. 28, 1879).

7. New York Herald, Feb. 5, 1879, p. 4; for Townsend's speech, see Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., pp.

794-95 (Jan. 28, 1879); for Hardenbergh's speech, see ibid., App., p. 200 (Jan. 28, 1879); ibid., p. 800 (Jan. 28, 1879). Representative John K. Luttrell [D-CA] delivered the only other speech on the House floor. The speech endorsed the bill but was mainly a partisan attack on the Republicans. (Ibid., p. 798 (Jan. 28, 1879); App. pp. 59-61.) Four other members of the House favoring the bill inserted speeches in the Congressional Record: Horace Davis [R-CA] (ibid., App., pp. 28-30); Dudley C. Haskell [R-KS] (ibid., App., pp. 31-33); Hernando D. Money [D-MS] (ibid., App., pp. 36-38); and Carter H. Harrison [D-IL] (ibid., App., pp. 26-27). Two non-voting delegates also inserted speeches: Orange Jacobs [R-Washington Territory] (ibid., App., pp. 30-31); and William W. Corlett [R-Wyoming Territory] (ibid., App., pp. 51-57). Conger's provision was later incorporated into the bill by the Senate.

8. Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., pp. 794, 800-01 (Jan. 28, 1879), App., pp. 31-33; New York Times, Jan. 31, 1879, p. 4.

9. For Sargent's speech, see Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., pp. 1264-67 (Feb. 13, 1879).

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., pp. 1269, 1270 (Feb. 13, 1879); App., pp. 91, 92, 94 (Feb. 14, 1879).

12. Ibid., pp. 1268, 1269, 1270, 1271 (Feb. 13, 1879), 1303 (Feb. 14, 1879).

13. For Jones's speech, see ibid., App., pp. 89-99 (Feb. 14, 1879). On the length of the speech, see New York Times, Feb. 15, 1879, p. 1.

14. For Blaine's speech, see Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., pp. 1299-1303 (Feb. 14, 1879).

15. James G. Blaine (letter, Washington, D.C., Feb. 21, 1879), in New York Tribune, Feb. 24, 1879, p. 5.

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections, 2nd ed. (Washington, 1985), p. 339; Portland (Maine) Eastern Argus, March 7, 1879, p. 2; Utica Herald, quoted in Springfield Republican, Feb. 21, 1879, p. 4.

19. Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections; Fred E. Haynes, Social Politics in the United States (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1924), p. 161; Garfield Diary, Dec. 4, 1878; George C. Gorham to Blaine, Sept. 13, 1878 (Microfilm Reel No. 8), Blaine Papers, Library of Congress; John Tyler, Jr., to Sherman, Feb. 19, 1879, and Feb. 25, 1879, John Sherman Papers, Library of Congress.

20. San Francisco Chronicle, Feb. 3, 1879, p. 2; New York World, Feb. 23, 1879, p. 4.

21. Cleveland Herald, Feb. 25, 1879 (clipping in Microfilm Reel No. 16), Blaine Papers; "Templeton" (Boston correspondent, Feb. 27) in Hartford Courant, March 1, 1879, p. 1; New York Sun, Feb. 25, 1879, p. 2.

22. The scrapbook filled with clippings can be found on Microfilm Reel No. 16 of the Blaine Papers. Correspondence can be found on earlier reels. New York World, Feb. 26, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 27, 1879, p. 4; New York Sun, Feb. 20, 1879, p. 2.

23. D.T. Morrel [?] to Bayard, Cambridge, Mass., Feb. 18, 1879; Philip A. Roach to Bayard, San Francisco, Jan. 16, 1879, and Jan. 18, 1879; Eugene Casserly to Bayard [telegram], San Francisco, Feb. 14, 1879, Thomas F. Bayard Papers, Library of Congress.

24. Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., pp. 1310-11 (Feb. 14, 1879); T.F. Bayard to Samuel Baily, jr. (letter, Washington, April 20, 1876), reprinted in San Francisco Call, Feb. 16, 1879, reprinted in New York World, Feb. 25, 1879, p. 5; A.W. Dickson to Bayard, Scranton, Pa., Feb. 21, 1879, Bayard Papers.

25. Cincinnati Gazette, Sept. 12, 1870, p. 2; Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., pp. 1306, 1310 (Feb. 14, 1879).

26. New York Times, Feb. 17, 1879, p. 4; New York Tribune, Feb. 19, 1879, p. 4; Chicago Times, Feb. 3, 1879, p. 6; New York World, Feb. 17, 1879, p. 4; Cincinnati Gazette, Feb. 18, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 19, 1879, p. 1.

Newspapers everywhere noted the same phenomenon. "California is one of the doubtful political States--this year Republican, next year Democratic, and third year independent," noted the Boston Journal. "Just now the vote of that State is thought to be very important, and both parties are anxious to secure it. The Democrats [in the House] made the first bid by reporting and advocating the measure, and many Republicans voted for it lest the party lose ground by opposing it. (Boston Journal, Feb. 3, 1879,

p. 1.) For similar reports and editorials emphasizing the purely political nature of the bill, see Philadelphia Inquirer, Feb. 24, 1879, p. 4, March 3, 1879, p. 4, Hartford Courant, Feb. 15, 1879, p. 2; New York Sun, Jan. 30, 1879, p. 2, Feb. 18, 1879, p. 2; Washington Star, Jan. 29, 1879.

27. On Hamlin, see H. Draper Hunt, Hannibal Hamlin of Maine: Lincoln's First Vice-President (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University, 1969); William A. Robinson, "Hannibal Hamlin," Dictionary of American Biography, VIII (New York: Scribners, 1932), pp. 196-98. For Hamlin's speech, see Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., pp. 1383-87 (Feb. 15, 1879). For Hamlin's other comments during the debate, see ibid., pp. 1274, 1275, 1276 (Feb. 13, 1879), 1301-02, 1305, 1314-15 (Feb. 14, 1879). The quotes are from pp. 1302, 1314, 1315, 1383.

28. Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., pp. 1276 (Feb. 13, 1879), 1315 (Feb. 14, 1879), 1385, 1386, 1387 (Feb. 15, 1879). The description of Hamlin is from the San Francisco Chronicle, Feb. 16, 1879, p. 8.

29. Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., pp. 1275 (Feb. 13, 1879), 1312 (Feb. 14, 1879), 1389, 1390 (Feb. 15, 1879).

30. New York Herald, Feb. 15, 1879, p. 4; Albany Journal, Feb. 17, 1879, p. 2; Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., p. 1312 (Feb. 14, 1879).

31. Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., pp. 1300-01 (Feb. 14, 1879), 1385, 1386 (Feb. 15, 1879).

32. Ibid., pp. 1301, 1315 (Feb. 14, 1879), 1386 (Feb. 15, 1879).

33. Ibid., p. 1384 (Feb. 15, 1879).

34. Ibid., pp. 1383, 1386 (Feb. 15, 1879). Hamlin's most recent biographer wrote that "Hamlin enjoyed one of his finest hours as a statesman when he championed American national honor by opposing the Chinese Exclusion Bill." (Hunt, Hannibal Hamlin of Maine, p. 212.)

35. Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., pp. 1315 (Feb. 14, 1879), 1391-92, 1393, 1394, 1398 (Feb. 15, 1879).

36. Ibid., pp. 1274, 1275 (Feb. 13, 1879), 1312 (Feb. 14, 1879), 1390, 1392 (Feb. 15, 1879); Lincoln quoted in Hofstadter, The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It, p. 102.

37. Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., pp. 1305, 1307 (Feb. 14, 1879).

38. Ibid., pp. 1309, 1311 (Feb. 14, 1879), 1390, 1394, 1400 (Feb. 15, 1879).

39. Ibid., pp. 1386, 1393, 1394 (Feb. 15, 1879).

40. Ibid., pp. 1390-91, 1399, 1400 (Feb. 15, 1879). The Senate also rejected a similar amendment minutes before the final vote.

41. Ibid., p. 1400 (Feb. 15, 1879). It is noteworthy that seven of the Democrats voting against the bill came from the South. They still looked forward to importing scores of Chinese to their region. Coincidentally, Isham G. Harris, who had chaired the Chinese Labor Convention in Memphis in 1869, was presently a senator from Tennessee. He was absent from Washington, however, during the entire debate. On continuing Southern interest in Chinese importation, see Nell Irvin Painter, Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas After Reconstruction (New York: Norton, 1976), p. 263.

42. Chicago Tribune, Feb. 17, 1879, p. 1; Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., p. 1796 (Feb. 22, 1879). The amended version passed by the Senate included four exceptions to the Fifteen Passenger Act: sea captains "in stress of harbor"; Chinese rescued from shipwrecked vessels; Chinese government ministers; and Chinese students with certificates from their government.

43. Washington Star, Feb. 25, 1879, p. 1; San Francisco Chronicle, Feb. 25, 1879, Feb. 28, 1879, p. 2; San Francisco Call, quoted in Cincinnati Enquirer, Feb. 3, 1879, p. 4; New York Herald, Feb. 18, 1879, p. 7, Feb. 28, 1879, p. 5; Virginia City (Nevada) Enterprise, quoted in ibid., Feb. 17, 1879, p. 7; Gov. Jno. H. Kinkead to James G. Blaine (telegram, Carson, Nevada, March 6, 1879) (Microfilm Reel No. 16), Blaine Papers; New York Tribune, Feb. 25, 1879, p. 1, Feb. 26, 1879, p. 1; Chicago Times, Feb. 27, 1879, p. 1.

44. New York Herald, Feb. 22, 1879, p. 7, Feb. 28, 1879, p. 5; Chicago Times, Feb. 17, 1879, p. 1, Feb. 22, 1879, p. 10, Feb. 25, 1879, p. 1, Feb. 26, 1879, p. 1, Feb. 27, 1879, p. 1; San Francisco Daily Stock Report, reprinted in ibid., Feb. 22, 1879, p. 2; San Francisco Chronicle, Jan. 30, 1879, p. 2; Paterson Labor Standard, Feb. 22, 1879, p. 3; Puck, (IV: 104), March 5, 1879; "A New Ballad of Secession," in New York Sun, Feb. 24, 1879, p. 2.

45. San Francisco Chronicle, Feb. 21, 1879, p. 3. The Washington correspondent for the New York Times made the identical observation. (New York Times, Feb. 22, 1879, p. 1.)

46. Philadelphia Inquirer, Feb. 17, 1879, p. 4; Hartford Courant, Feb. 15, 1879, p. 2; Brooklyn Eagle, Feb. 17, 1879, p. 2, Feb. 24, 1879, p. 2. See also ibid., Feb. 22, 1879, p. 2. New York World, Feb. 17, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 23, 1879, p. 4; Louisville Courier-Journal, reprinted in Chicago Times, Feb. 22, 1879, p. 2; New York Irish-American, March 8, 1879, p. 4; Poughkeepsie Eagle, Feb. 24, 1879, reprinted in New York World, Feb. 25, 1879, p. 5; Springfield Republican, Feb. 20, 1879, p. 4; Cincinnati Commercial, quoted in Boston Times, Feb. 24, 1879, reprinted in New York World, Feb. 25, 1879, p. 5.

The stance of the New York Irish-American refutes the claim of historian Stuart Creighton Miller that "in New York City during the 1870s ... Irish editors were unanimously opposed to Chinese immigration." (Stuart Creighton Miller, The Unwelcome Immigrant: The American Image of the Chinese, 1785-1882 (Berkeley: University of California, 1969), p. 199.)

47. Chicago Times, Feb. 17, 1879, p. 6; Cincinnati Enquirer, Feb. 15, 1879, p. 4; Chicago Tribune, Feb. 25, 1879, p. 4; The Nation, Feb. 20, 1879, p. 130. See also Albany Journal, Feb. 15, 1879, p. 2, Feb. 18, 1879, p. 2, Feb. 24, 1879, p. 2.

48. Cincinnati Gazette, Feb. 18, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 25, 1879, p. 4, March 3, 1879, p. 4. On the Gazette's pro-exclusion stance in 1870, see chapter 1.

49. New York Tribune, Feb. 8, 1879, p. 6, Feb. 19, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 21, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 24, 1879, p. 4. See also Jan. 21, 1879, p. 4.

50. New York Times, Jan. 29, 1879, p. 4, Jan. 31, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 17, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 19, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 24, 1879, p. 4, March 4, 1879, p. 4. See also Feb. 15, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 18, 1879, p. 4. Other journals that had spoken for a generation of Republicans echoed identical themes. See, for example, Hartford Courant, Feb. 15, 1879, p. 2, Feb. 17, 1879, p. 2, Feb. 24, 1879, p. 2; Boston Journal, Feb. 3, 1879, p. 1, Feb. 18, 1879, p. 1; Philadelphia Inquirer, Feb. 15, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 17, 1879, p. 4.

51. Boston Post, quoted in St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Feb. 24, 1879, p. 2.

52. New York Times, Feb. 19, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 21, 1879, p. 8; New York Herald, Jan. 29, 1879, p. 6; Feb. 28, 1879, p. 5. See also ibid., March 1, 1879, p. 10; New York Commercial, reprinted in San Francisco Chronicle, Feb. 21, 1879, p. 3.

53. New York Times, Feb. 21, 1879, p. 8, Feb. 28, 1879, p. 3; New York Herald, Feb. 28, 1879, p. 5; Philadelphia Inquirer, March 3, 1879, p. 2.

54. New York Herald, Feb. 10, 1879, p. 3; Baltimore Methodist, cited in ibid., Feb. 23, 1879, p. 13; New York Times, Feb. 19, 1879, p. 1. For anti-bill sentiment, see New York Independent, Baptist Weekly, Philadelphia National Baptist, Christian Intelligencer, and Christian Union, summarized in New York Herald, Feb. 23, 1879, p. 13. See also New York Times, Feb. 18, 1879, p. 2; Philadelphia Inquirer, Feb. 25, 1879, p. 2; Cincinnati Gazette, Feb. 24, 1879, p. 2. For pro-bill sentiment, see Rev. Charles Taylor (Methodist Episcopal) in Cincinnati Enquirer, Jan. 22, 1879, p. 8; Rev. C.W. Wendte (Unitarian) in Cincinnati Gazette, Feb. 24, 1879, p. 2; Chicago Alliance, Feb. 22, 1879, and Chicago Christian Cynosure, March 6, 1879, both clippings in Microfilm Reel No. 16, in Blaine Papers.

55. New York Times, Feb. 27, 1879, p. 5; New York Irish World and American Industrial Liberator, July 12, 1879, p. 3; New Haven Register, reprinted in Chicago Times, Feb. 28, 1879, p. 9; "T.W." [Thurlow Weed] (letter, New-York, Feb. 24, 1879) in New York Tribune, Feb. 25, 1879, p. 1.

56. New York Tribune, Feb. 28, 1879, p. 2; Cincinnati Gazette, Feb. 27, 1879, p. 2; New York Herald, Feb. 19, 1879, p. 3, Feb. 25, 1879; Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Connecticut, January Session, 1879 (Hartford: Case, Lockwood & Brainerd, 1879), p. 314; Hartford Courant, Feb. 19, 1879, pp. 1, 4.

Among the Connecticut state representatives voting in favor was P.T. Barnum. Barnum was a Republican and former abolitionist. He also managed a circus in which one of his chief attractions was "Chang the Giant." Both these elements no doubt motivated the great showman's position in favor of open Chinese immigration.

57. Hartford Courant, Feb. 20, 1879, p. 1; New York Herald, Feb. 20, 1879, p. 7; Cincinnati Gazette, Feb. 21, 1879, p. 2.

A humorous article in the Graphic (reprinted in the Pottsville Miners' Journal, Feb. 28, 1879, p. 1) captured the differences in opinion between East and West:

"Connecticut Legislature--Mr. Hayes, we earnestly hope the provisions of that Anti-Chinese bill may never disgrace our national statutes.

"California--Hayes, if you do veto it Rome out here will howl.

"Maryland Methodist Ministers--You must veto it, Mr. Hayes.

"Nevada--What! Talk of vetoing the bill? Don't you do it, Rutherford; don't you do it!

"New York Methodist Ministers--The bill is a crime against civilization, Mr. Hayes.

"California--Heys. Veto likely. Sound the hewgag! Ring the alarm bells! Secede! Draw out! Pacific Republic! Hoopla mule! Caramba!

"P.T. Barnum--Mr. Hayes, remember that Chinamen have souls. I had one once on exhibition.

"From this man--Infamous bill!

"From that man--The bill is the salvation of our beloved country.

"From another man--Keep our brown brothers out? Never! Gentleness, mercy, peace!

"From still another man--Keep the lepers and beggars out? Yes! And kill those that are in!

"And altogether and to-day there goes up to the White House a confused clamor of "Do it Ruthy!" "Don't you dare to!" "If you do we'll break the old thing up!" "Do!"

"Don't!" "Infamous!" "Right!" "Get off my toes!"

"Wrong."

58. Other cities where socialists held meetings included New York, Newark, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Louisville, St. Louis, and New Orleans. Chicago Socialist, Jan. 25, 1879, p. 8, Feb. 1, 1879, p. 1; New York Herald, Jan. 20, 1879, p. 7, Jan. 22, 1879, p. 10, Jan. 23, 1879, p. 10; Cincinnati Enquirer, Jan. 20, 1879, p. 4; Chicago Times, Jan. 19, 1879, p. 10, Jan. 23, 1879, p. 3; Baltimore Sun, Jan. 13, 1879, reprinted in ibid., Jan. 16, 1879; New York Sun, Jan. 23, 1879, reprinted in ibid., Jan. 28, 1879, p. 10; Chicago Tribune, Jan. 20, 1879, p. 8.

59. Cigar Makers' Official Journal, March 10, 1879, p. 1, May 10, 1878, pp. 1-2; Boston Globe, Jan. 20, 1879, p. 1, Feb. 17, 1879, p. 3, Feb. 18, 1879, p. 4; George B. Perry, Secretary of the Central Trades and Labor Union, to Ben Butler, Feb. 18, 1879, Butler Papers, Library of Congress; A. Strasser (letter, New York, Nov. 17, 1878) in Paterson Labor Standard, Nov. 23, 1878, p. 4; New York Herald, Feb. 12, 1879, p. 9, Feb. 16, 1879, p. 14; P.M. Arthur, Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (letter, Cleveland, Feb. 17, 1879), Josia B. Dyer, Granite Cutters International Union (letter, Rockland, Me., Feb. 17, 1879), William

Martin, Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers of the United States (letter, Pittsburgh, Feb. 17, 1879), in Cigar Makers' Official Journal, March 10, 1879, p. 3.

60. Cigar Makers' Official Journal, May 10, 1879, p. 2; New York Herald, Feb. 21, 1879, p. 3; Chicago Times, Feb. 23, 1879, p. 14.

61. Cigar Makers' Official Journal, March 10, 1879, p. 4, May 10, 1879, p. 2; Samuel Gompers, Seventy Years of Life and Labor: An Autobiography, Nick Salvatore, ed., (Ithaca: I.L.R., N.Y., 1984), pp. 58-62. After failure in Congress, cigar makers turned to state legislatures for relief. Four years of persistent lobbying finally led to a New York law abolishing tenement-house labor in 1883. The courts, however, later declared the law unconstitutional. The attorney for the manufacturers was former Secretary of State William M. Evarts.

62. Cigar Makers' Official Journal, March 10, 1879, p. 1; Boston Globe, Jan. 31, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 22, 1879, p. 1; Daniel J. Byrnes, et. al., of the Brotherhood of Labor, to Butler, Washington, Feb. 7, 1879, in Butler Papers. Wright soon switched parties and became one of the nation's leading Greenbackers.

For other working-class meetings during the winter of 1879, see, for example, Chicago Socialist, March 1, 1879, pp. 5, 8; Chicago Times, Jan. 13, 1879, p. 10, Jan. 27, 1879, p. 10, Feb. 3, 1879, p. 10, Feb. 24, 1879, p. 9; Boston Globe, Jan. 27, 1879, p. 1, Jan. 28, 1879, p. 2, Jan. 29, 1879, p. 2, Jan. 31, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 1, 1879, p. 5, Feb. 3, 1879, p. 2, Feb. 6, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 19, 1879, p. 1, Feb. 27, 1879, p. 4, March 3, 1879, p. 3; Brooklyn Eagle, Feb. 15, 1879, p. 3; New York Herald, March 3, 1879, p. 4; Cincinnati Enquirer, March 2, 1879, p. 8. These meetings covered the entire gamut of working-class concerns--shorter hours, higher wages, a bureau of labor, abolition of prison, tenement, and child labor, factory inspection, workers' compensation, improved organization, and criticism of the major parties--and said nothing on Chinese immigration.

63. Cincinnati Enquirer, Feb. 24, 1879, p. 8; Washington Star, Feb. 25, 1879, p. 4. On earlier meetings of the National Workingmen's Association, see ibid., Jan. 7, 1879, p. 4, Jan. 14, 1879, p. 4, Jan. 21, 1879, p. 4, Jan. 28, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 4, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 11, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 19, 1879, p. 4. Interestingly, on March 3, the N.W.A. gave special praise to Senator Sargent, but only on behalf of his efforts in the Government Printing Office. Nothing was said about his efforts on behalf of the Fifteen Passenger Act. (Ibid., March 4, 1879, p. 4.)

64. Pittsburgh National Labor Tribune, March 8, 1879, p. 1. It should be noted that the issue of Feb. 15, 1879, is missing. Paterson Labor Standard, Feb. 22, 1879, p. 1; "Rusticus" (letter, Matawan, N.J., Jan. 26, 1879), in Chicago Socialist, Feb. 15, 1879, p. 2; Chicago Socialist, Nov. 30, 1878, p. 5, March 8, 1879, p. 4, March 15, 1879, p. 4. For a variety of socialist opinions on Chinese immigration and discomfort with exclusion, see the lively correspondence of "Rusticus," "Leo," "Justus," and W.G.H. Smart, in ibid., Jan. 11 - April 26, 1879.

65. Patrick Ford criticized the racial appeal embraced by workers in the West. "Some of the unskilled orators on the Pacific may not be able to give expression to the true idea in the ... most felicitous style;" he wrote, "but thinking men--men who look beneath the surface--will see this without the aid of orators. 'Cheap Labor!' What does it mean? 'Cheap Labor' means Slave Labor. The capitalist sees this. The monster corporations see it. The swindling land grabbers and mine thieves see it. Why should not the Laborer see it?" Contrast Ford's term "thinking men," a non-class-oriented phrase applicable to all who think critically, with Hamlin's "best men," an exclusive term confined to well-to-do men of letters or property. (New York Irish World and American Industrial Liberator, March 1, 1879, p. 4, March 8, 1879, p. 4. See also April 19, 1879, p. 4.)

66. Cincinnati Enquirer, Dec. 28, 1878, reprinted in San Francisco Chronicle, Jan. 3, 1879, p. 4; Cincinnati Enquirer, Jan. 23, 1879, p. 4; San Francisco Chronicle, Dec. 28, 1878, reprinted in Pittsburgh National Labor Tribune, Jan. 11, 1879, p. 4. The Boston Pilot made similar comments: "Workingmen, begin to think for yourselves. You can rule the country when you agree. Make up your minds to protect your interests." Again, the claim was that workers had not yet thought about the issue, much less united to take action. See also San Francisco Call, which suggested that Eastern workers had failed to organize behind Chinese exclusion. (Boston Pilot, Jan. 4, 1879, p. 4; San Francisco Call, Feb. 25, 1879, clipping in Microfilm Reel 16, Blaine Papers.)

67. "Rusticus," (letter, Matawan, N.J., April 20, 1879), in Chicago Socialist, May 3, 1879, p. 5; New York Irish World and American Industrial Liberator, Sept. 27, 1879, p. 1.

68. Chicago Tribune, March 2, 1879, p. 7; Chicago Times, March 2, 1879, p. 2. The official report, it might be added, made no mention of this exchange. The only comment on race came from a Braidwood miner named William

Cunningham. When asked, "How do you feel toward the colored miners who come here during the strike?" Cunningham answered: "We have no hard feelings toward the colored miners. We blame those who brought them here." Substitute the word "Chinese" for "colored" and the miner could have been echoing workers' views for the past decade. (Illinois House Report of Special Committee on Labor, (Springfield, Ill.: Weber, Magie, 1879). The quote is from p. 62.) On Morgan's trade, see Investigation by a Select Committee of the House of Representatives Relative to the Causes of the General Depression in Labor and Business; and as to Chinese Immigration (Washington, 1879), p. 467.

69. Cincinnati Enquirer, Feb. 20, 1879, p. 4, Feb. 24, 1879, p. 4; Chicago Times, March 2, 1879, p. 2.

70. New York Tribune, Feb. 19, 1879, p. 4; Cleveland Herald, Feb. 25, 1879, clipping in Microfilm Reel 16, Blaine Papers. For similar views, see Boston Globe, March 10, 1879, p. 4; Joaquin Miller (letter, New-York, Feb. 23, 1879), in New York Tribune, Feb. 25, 1879, p. 1. Historians have followed this line in blaming Chinese exclusion on Irish immigrants. See, for example, Mary Roberts Coolidge, Chinese Immigration (New York: Holt, 1909).

71. Ronald P. Formisano, The Transformation of Political Culture: Massachusetts Parties, 1790s - 1840s (New York: Oxford, 1983), pp. 16, 324-25.

72. Accounts of the Cabinet meeting appeared in many newspapers. See, for example, Washington Star, Jan. 3, 1879, p. 1; Chicago Times, Jan. 4, 1879, pp. 4, 6; Boston Globe, Jan. 4, 1879, p. 4; Portland (Maine) Eastern Argus, Jan. 6, 1879, p. 2; San Francisco Chronicle, Jan. 21, 1879, p. 3. The quotes are from Chicago Times, Jan. 4, 1879, p. 4; New York Herald, Jan. 4, 1879, p. 5.

73. New York Herald, Feb. 19, 1879, p. 3; Springfield Republican, Feb. 24, 1879, p. 5; Cincinnati Gazette, Feb. 24, 1879, p. 1; San Francisco Chronicle, Jan. 21, 1879, p. 3; New York Times, Feb. 18, 1879, p. 1. See also Executive Doc. #70, House of Representatives, 45th Cong., 2nd sess., Message from the President of the United States, Transmitting, In Response to a Resolution of the House of Representatives, a Report from the Secretary of State in Relation to the Negotiations Concerning the Immigration of Chinese to the United States, April 12, 1880.

74. Rutherford B. Hayes, The Diary of a President, 1875-1881, Concerning the Disputed Election, the End of Reconstruction, and the Beginning of Civil Service, T. Harry

Williams ed. (New York: David McKay, 1964), pp. 187-88 (Feb. 20, 1879), 192 (Feb. 28, 1879).

75. New York Graphic, Feb. 24, 1879, quoted in San Francisco Chronicle, Feb. 25, 1879, p. 3; James A. Garfield, Diary, Feb. 23, 1879, Feb. 24, 1879. Garfield had also met privately with Evarts in January to discuss the Fifteen Passenger Act and Chinese immigration. See ibid., Jan. 26, 1879.

76. Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., pp. 2275-76 (March 1, 1879).

77. Cincinnati Enquirer, March 6, 1879, p. 4; Boston Globe, Feb. 26, 1879, p. 4.

78. Garfield, Diary, Feb. 24, 1879; Cleveland Daily Advance, Jan. 11, 1879, p. 2. The same comment appeared in a weekly edition. See Cleveland Weekly Advance, Jan. 19, 1879, p. 4.

CHAPTER 9

"BREAD AND BUTTER IS ALIKE TO ALL NATIONALITIES":

THE MOUNTING PRESSURE ON EASTERN WORKERS

TO OPPOSE CHINESE IMMIGRATION, 1879-1880

"Whoever tries to divide the workers on nationality is an enemy to Labor. The wage worker has no longer any interest in race issues. His fight is one for bread and butter which is alike to the French and Germans the English and the Irish, the Yankees and the Chinese."

--Fall River Labor Standard, 1879

"Welcome, O! Brothers, free Chinese..."

--George Sloan, 1880

On May 7, 1879, two months after Hayes vetoes the Fifteen Passenger Act, California voters approved a new state constitution by a margin of 78,000 to 67,000.¹ The hand of the Workingmen was evident: the document was the most radical pro-labor charter in the nation. The California constitution empowered the state government to regulate corporations and railroads. It outlawed stock-watering and established a railroad commission to oversee transportation rates. It also barred railroads from giving free passes to politicians. The constitution limited utility and telegraph rates and authorized an income tax. It also equalized tax rates for cultivated and uncultivated land--an effort to halt land speculation--and prevented foreclosure on small farms. It set up a public school

system and clamped down on lobbying state legislators. The constitution abolished contract prison labor as of 1882 and declared the eight-hour day law on all public works. Tacked on to these working-class reforms was a series of anti-Chinese clauses. The constitution forbid the employment of Chinese workers by any corporation or for any public works. It also authorized the legislature to "discourage their immigration by all means within its power," and declared void "all contracts for coolie labor." Finally, it empowered lawmakers to set boundaries for Chinese neighborhoods and relocate Chinese residents beyond city and town lines.²

A combination of both radical and racist doctrines, the California constitution sparked interest across the country. It especially struck a chord among workers in the East. Labor leaders in New York, Boston, Chicago, and elsewhere held mass meetings to celebrate the new constitution and the achievement of the Workingmen's Party of California. These meetings also signaled the resurrection of Denis Kearney in the East. Laughed out of the region just a half-year earlier, he now became a symbol of labor triumphant, the champion workingman slaying the dragon capital. Whatever his faults, he had led the working classes to victory in spearheading the drive for ratification. How many working-class spokesmen, after all, could boast of such a triumph as the adoption of a new constitution? Kearney's star was

rising again, but whether he could carry the anti-Chinese movement to new heights remained unknown.

The first celebratory meeting took place in New York on May 15. Just two hundred attended, the New York Tribune sneered, "a motley gathering of workingmen and idle boys." To the World they were "Alleged Working-men." Sixty police officers were on hand. The meeting approved numerous resolutions praising Kearney, the workingmen of California, and especially the new constitution for its clauses on taxes, land subsidies, and government control of railroads and telegraphs. Workers also praised the charter because it "condemned the importation of Chinamen." The meeting's chairman closed the evening "with a few words, urging men to organize and threatening to 'root out the Chinese and the high-salaried officials.'" Nothing more specific was said.³

New Yorkers held a second meeting a week later that was both better organized and better attended. Under the auspices of the Greenback-Labor and Workingmen's parties, a crowd of 500 assembled in Union Square on May 21. John J. Farrell, leader of a recent strike on the Third Avenue rail line, called the meeting to order and introduced popular Greenbackers William A.A. Carsey and George Blair. Carsey saluted the new constitution and Blair urged the working classes in the East to unite as they had in the West. The

balance of the meeting, however, focused on local concerns. Carsey offered support for striking longshoremen, Leander Thompson denounced the state's "tramp" law, and Robert Blissert, the Herald noted, attacked monopolists and capitalists and "kept the crowd in roars of laughter by his humorous manner of delivery and quaint expressions." The three surviving accounts of the meeting, in the Herald, the Tribune, and the Irish World, make no mention of the Chinese in speeches, resolutions, or comments.⁴

Speakers at other meetings were more direct and more voluble. In Boston, the Globe reported, 3,000 workingmen "gave vent to an enthusiastic expression of the feelings of the people over the recent victory of their fellow-workingmen in California." It was an evening of song, poetry, and oratory. "The constitution adopted in California," declared Reverend J.M.L. Babcock, "may not be perfect, but it will give the working classes a chance for its elements to right themselves." Babcock discussed various issues, such as eight hours legislation and Massachusetts's new poll tax (with which, he said, the Republicans "contemplated crushing the laboring man"), and counseled workers to gain inspiration from their brethren in the West. "The great triumph in California," the Reverend said, "admonishes us to union, and a like union will accomplish for us in old aristocratic Massachusetts the same grand results." Timothy Coughlin, another speaker, noted

"that since Cornwallis surrendered to Washington there never was such a great victory as that achieved by Denis Kearney in California." He talked of using the "bullet" and the "ballot" against "capital and corporations," and wished "to see the gilded frauds ousted from the high places in the land and the honest, hard-fisted sons of toil substituted." Coughlin, the Globe noted, "is the rival of Denis Kearney in his powers of invective." Despite all the oratory, speakers never mentioned the anti-Chinese clauses of the new constitution. The subject surfaced in only a single resolution which criticized "the coolie labor system." Specifically condemning the system rather than the Chinese, Boston workers remained vague on solutions. Was it an end to Chinese immigration they wanted? Or an end to importation? They did not say.⁵

Only in Chicago did workers cross the line and eliminate this ambiguity. At a meeting on May 18, the Chicago Council of Trades and Labor Unions became the first working-class organization east of the Rocky Mountains to heed the call for Chinese exclusion. Many prominent Socialists, such as Albert Parsons, Thomas Morgan, and George Schilling, were present. "Every seat," noted the Chicago Socialist, "both on the main floor and in the galleries, was filled, about 300 ladies being present, while many were compelled to stand." The Chicago Times estimated substantially fewer people, yet conceded: "The greater

portion of the audience belonged to the labor party, but many were present merely by curiosity to see what the crowd would do." They were not disappointed. Giddy with the passage of the California constitution, the audience listened appreciatively to molder William B. Creech, "the socialist songster," who "sang an original song eulogizing Mr. Kearney and the men of California...." The audience joined in the chorus set to the tune of "John Brown's Body." Following numerous speeches on eight hours, a proposed general strike, and other local matters, the meeting resolved to

congratulate the honest, earnest, courageous, and liberty-loving people of California upon their manful fight and their glorious victory, and that no words can describe the sentiments of gratitude the workingmen of America owe to Denis Kearney and the brave band of Labor-agitators who have been foremost in the battle.

The meeting further resolved: "That in answer to the California war-cry of 'The Chinese must go,' we echo the universal watchword of American workingmen: 'Not only the Chinese, but Chinese institutions must go.'"⁶

At last, after years of lobbying by West Coast activists, the bipartisan approval of Chinese immigration restriction by Congress, and the adoption of a state constitution replete with anti-Chinese clauses, a labor body east of the Rocky Mountains had come out unequivocally against Chinese immigration. Organized labor, it appeared, had finally turned the corner. Eastern workers were now prepared to mobilize for exclusion. Or were they? Did the

Chicago meeting signal a change in direction in working-class opinion? Had immigration restriction finally become part of the working-class agenda? Would momentum now begin to build for Chinese exclusion?

The answer to all these questions is no. The Chicago meeting stands out more as an anomaly than as a trend-setter, notable primarily as an exception. No other documented meeting in the East specifically mentioned Chinese immigration; instead workers used the more pointed terms "importation" and "coolie labor system." To most workers these distinctions still mattered. Of equal significance, when the subject of Chinese immigration came up at all, workers acknowledged it briefly and then hurried on to other matters. Even amid reports all spring long that wealthy planters intended to bring in Chinese workers to the South to replace blacks migrating to the Midwest, workers (outside of Chicago) did not call for any ban on Chinese immigration.⁷ Dissension and disinterest on the subject still persisted in the working-class community. No consensus on Chinese immigration had yet emerged among Eastern workers.

Just a few weeks earlier in Boston, for example, labor leaders from across the state had gathered to form the Massachusetts Workingmen's Association, an organization intended "to advance labor-reform ideas." After much debate, delegates narrowly rejected forming a new political

party. Still, they discussed and adopted the standard working-class platform: eight hours, compulsory education, abolition of child and contract prison labor, an end to usury and the poll tax, and the passage of all laws "for the benefit of labor." Chinese immigration came up once. Delegate George Moulton "moved that a clause be added stating that the Chinese must go." The Globe's account of the meeting gave no details of the debate, noting only: "This was lost." For whatever reasons, members of the newly-founded Massachusetts Workingmen's Association did not want an anti-Chinese clause in their platform. The sinophobic Boston Globe lamented this lack of anti-Chinese sentiment among the city's working class: "While the [Chinese] race is represented in Boston mainly by about a hundred laundrymen, it is unlikely that the mass of workingmen here can be brought to unite in any very decided protest against the Chinese. It seems that the almond-eyed washerman of Boston are better treated in the Hub than in most of the cities in this country where they have come in search of spoil."⁸

Nor were workers of the Bay State alone. In an editorial on the California constitution, the Chicago Socialist summarized the dilemma workers faced on the issue of Chinese immigration, a dilemma they had been facing for ten years. Agonizing over "the almost utter impossibility of distinguishing between those who come as slaves and those

who come as freemen, one cannot wonder that strong measures --even trenching on bigotry--have been adopted to eradicate the withering blight." Whatever the appropriate solution, the Socialist stated, the anti-Chinese clauses of the California constitution "are vitally wrong in principle." Chinese immigration deflected attention from genuine class-based issues. As if to back up these sentiments, Chicago Socialists had recently sponsored a giant exposition filled with exhibits, speeches, and entertainments open to every nationality; several Chinese immigrants attended.⁹

Eastern workers praised the California constitution as a model to follow but they clearly could separate the labor and anti-Chinese clauses. Perhaps the best indication of this appears in a notice published in the Irish World. A self-styled "Citizens Committee," fed up with the formalities and stuffiness of standard working-class meetings, issued a manifesto to rally workers in New York City by using the same confrontational approach patented by Denis Kearney. They copied his tactics but not his demands. "Attention Citizens!" the notice proclaimed:

The "Sand Lot" public meetings in Union square every Saturday night (on the Workingmen's New Platform to meet the times, where speakers bring their own seats!) will be commenced June 28, 8 P.M. A New Constitution for New York on the California plan (without Chinese clause, and a currency without coin!) will be discussed by local and national speakers! No leaders! (but the people themselves!) No party! (but the voters!) The IRISH WORLD programme (American industry, and Greenbacks for money) will be advocated! All citizens invited! No cut-and-dried chairmen and resolutions! No put-up jobs for sell out where all are partners! As

these meetings will be entirely orderly and legal, no police will be required! [emphasis added] ¹⁰

Even amid the frenzy of the new constitution, anti-Chinese politics still rankled workers. After nearly a decade of awareness of the movement to restrict Chinese immigration, most workers balked at joining the crusade.

Anti-Chinese sentiment in the East was like a wave on a beach: it did not run deep and it receded quickly. And without a generating force, such as California or Washington, it subsided completely. The working-class meetings in May 1879 illustrate this long-running feature of the Chinese exclusion crusade: the momentum came from above or from the West, not just from below and not from the East. National politicians and Californians still set the rhythm of the anti-Chinese movement. Eastern workers acted--or reacted--only when prodded. They never initiated. If roused they responded--up to a point--but they repeatedly had to be coaxed out of their lethargy. Eastern workers had far more pressing concerns, and without constant reminders the subject of Chinese labor would again disappear from the working-class agenda.

This pattern persisted as the season advanced, and it would dominate the anti-Chinese movement for the next three years. A few weeks after the May meetings workers nationwide mobilized for the largest coordinated wave of demonstrations of the entire year. Preparations for these,

in fact, had been the primary impetus for the May 18 meeting of the Chicago Trades and Labor Council. The Chicago council was responding to the St. Louis Trades and Labor Assembly which had just issued a call to "all trade and labor organizations [to] unite in one body in proclaiming to the world on the 4th day of July, 1879, that eight hours shall be a standard day's work." The idea caught on quickly, and both the National Workingmen's Assembly and the International Labor Union endorsed the call. So did workers, Socialists, and labor advocates across the country.¹¹

As Independence Day dawned, immense rallies and processions took place in Boston, Lynn, Brooklyn, Manhattan, Rochester, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Washington, Chicago, St. Louis, Detroit, Louisville, Shawnee, Ohio, and Braidwood, Illinois. While eight hours served as the focus, the parades also embraced many other issues in a day of celebration of working-class solidarity. Chicago marchers, which included hundreds of wood-carvers, cabinet-makers, upholsterers, tailors, carpenters, cigar makers, printers, shoemakers, blacksmiths, and brickmakers, carried banners denouncing capitalism in general and an anti-tramp law in particular, along with caricatures degrading Ulysses S. Grant, Tom Scott, and Henry Ward Beecher. New York marchers of the Socialistic Labor Party held aloft a flag with a portrait of Thomas Jefferson bearing the inscription:

"S.L.P. Men of the Multitude Be Free." A girl of about twelve carried a red banner on which was written the single word, "Freiheit." To illustrate the importance of labor in a republic, St. Louis featured wagons carrying mechanics at work. Most of the parades concluded with a mass picnic of food, spirits, festivities, and speeches. In all the varied accounts of each demonstration and procession, no mention of Chinese immigration exists. Less than two months had passed since the May meetings. Whatever anti-Chinese sentiment had momentarily arisen had already dissipated, quietly retreating to the realm of the insignificant.¹²

The old pattern thus continued: out of sight out of mind. Even when taking the spotlight to advance their demands, workers kept Chinese immigration restriction hidden in darkness. The next forum for workers' grievances came later in July when the investigation by the House of Representatives into the causes of the depression--formerly the Hewitt Committee of 1878--reconvened for its second round of hearings. Unlike the first committee, politicians specifically charged this second one with looking into the effects of Chinese immigration. The "Congressional Hard Times Committee" began taking testimony in Chicago on July 28, 1879. For five days representatives interviewed a cross-range of society, from bankers, lawyers, merchants, and businessmen to printers, shoemakers, iron-molders, and common laborers. Many of the workers and working-class

leaders were prominent Socialists, such as Albert Parsons, Thomas Morgan, and George Schilling. In the course of the proceedings they presented the platforms and principles of the Chicago Trades and Labor Council, the Eight-Hour League, and the Socialistic Labor Party. None of these platforms mentioned Chinese immigration. Workers themselves referred to the subject only obliquely. Thomas Morgan, for example, who had recently dismissed the subject as unimportant when testifying before the Illinois legislature, noted that "Cheap production means success, and if the theory of the survival of the fittest be correct, Yankee employers and Chinese laborers are destined to survive." He didn't elaborate. In fact, when listing remedies to the depression, Morgan, who testified longer than any other worker, made no mention of exclusion or immigration restriction. His colleague William Halley was equally vague. An expatriate printer from the West Coast, Halley identified himself as "a member of Denis Kearney's commons in California." He also made one brief reference to the Chinese. In a general statement denouncing the Pacific Railroad company, Halley commented:

Instead of constructing its road with white labor and settling it upon its lands, it imported cheap Coolie labor from China, and degraded white labor to its level. It drove and is still driving the pre-emptors off the public lands and gobbling them up for themselves. No tyranny has been more grinding, no sway more despotic, than that of the four men who now own this vast property.

The rhetoric was familiar. Chinese labor was no more than an aspect of the much larger problem of land monopoly and corporate privilege. Further, Halley focused on importation, not immigration, and even this reference was fleeting. He suggested no actions or remedial legislation, and said no more on the subject. In the course of the five-day proceedings Chicago workers and working-class spokesmen and women made no other mentions of Chinese immigration, Chinese exclusion, or the recent Fifteen Passenger Act of Congress. In these face-to-face parleys with legislators where workers had a golden opportunity to express their grievances and demands directly to lawmakers they virtually ignored the entire subject of Chinese immigration. The issue remained absent from the working-class agenda.¹³

In the week that the committee met in Chicago one witness did bring up the subject of immigration restriction. His name was O.W. Potter, president of the North Chicago Rolling Mill Company. He claimed to have 4,000 employees. "Our greatest difficulty," he said, "is in getting the common laborer." Despite this problem, the factory owner opposed both hiring convict labor and implementing the eight-hour day. He also opposed letting the "idle and criminal classes" emigrate to the United States. Nor did he stop there. "I think that a law ought to be passed to prevent Chinese immigration to this country," he testified. Potter defended the President's recent veto of the Fifteen

Passenger Act, however, on the grounds that it violated the treaty. "If there was no treaty on the subject," a Congressman asked him, "would you then justify the President in vetoing the act?" "No, sir;" the manufacturer replied, "I should say that he ought not to veto any law that Congress would enact prohibiting the immigration of Chinese here." Over the next few months the committee went on to meet in San Francisco, Des Moines, New York, and Boston. Potter, a manufacturer, was the only person east of the Rocky Mountains to suggest or even to mention Chinese exclusion.¹⁴

The case in California was different. The committee met in San Francisco from August 15 to 19. The bulk of the witnesses came from the ranks of the rich and powerful: merchants, manufacturers, attorneys, and publishers. They were balanced by just a handful of workers, consisting of a shoemaker, a lather, a miner, and a "street peddler." Practically everyone urged banning Chinese immigrants. "[I]f the Chinese immigration continues," testified Joseph C. Gorman, a railroad engineer and surveyor who had entered the tinning business, "we will have to leave or fight." The Chinese and white races, he added, could never exist in harmony. Several manufacturers claimed they could not survive the competition and were going out of business because "Chinamen work cheaper for other Chinamen than they do for white men." Missionary James Gilroy simply called

the Chinese thieves and criminals, "the lowest of the low." Others emphasized familiar cultural factors, such as "paganism" and "non-assimilability," but shirt manufacturer S.A. Kusel cited a biological reason: "I believe that the Chinamen can beat the Irish with the grub-ax and spade and shovel and digging in mud. They stand the stooping position best." Alexander Dunbar, a contractor, challenged Kusel's assessment, arguing that "one white man is worth three Chinaman [sic]." Regardless, both favored exclusion.¹⁵

The most interesting testimony came from those who had switched sides. Loring Pickering, publisher of the Evening Bulletin and Morning Call, noted that "seven or eight years ago there was hardly anybody in my own office who did not say, 'Let the Chinese come. Give everybody a chance'; but I do not think there is one there now who will say so. They find that the Chinese are eating up everything." Pickering endorsed the Fifteen Passenger Act, and added that if the Chinese had the right to vote they would simply sell it to the highest bidder. John F. Schaefer, a clothing merchant and manufacturer, had also had a change of heart. "I have fought for the Chinese for ten years," he testified. "I thought that they would make good American citizens, that they would be like other people and would adapt themselves to American customs, but I find that I was mistaken." If the Chinese weren't excluded, Schaefer said, they would "overrun" and "ruin" the United States by 1930. "I have

always been a steady Republican," he concluded, "but this idea of wanting to sell out (as I may say) our country and homes to the Chinese goes against my grain."¹⁶

Of the twenty-eight Californians who testified only two in any way defended the Chinese. One of them, the well-known Rev. Otis Gibson, gave both the pro's and con's of Chinese immigration. On the whole, he said, the Chinese were good for American industry. Furthermore, he had converted several "pagans" to Christianity, a promising sign. However, he noted, the Chinese lived one on top of another, smoked opium heavily, and believed in plural wives. And most Chinese women, he added, were prostitutes. Still, the issue must be placed in global perspective. The U.S. received "the worst class" of immigrants from Europe. "They," Gibson insisted, "are more of a curse to this land than the Chinese are." Gibson's equitable solution was simply to restrict immigration from both continents, Asia and Europe.¹⁷

The other "pro-Chinese" witness was Patrick J. Healy, a journeyman shoemaker and newspaper deliveryman studying to be a lawyer. A native of Ireland and an American citizen since 1865, Healy openly favored Chinese immigration. His advice, he stated bluntly, was "to let the Chinese severely alone, and to mind our own business." When questioned by a Congressman how he would feel if the Chinese population

increased and gained political power in California, Healy responded:

I would be willing to treat them the same as any other human beings, and to compete with them on the same conditions. I would be willing to grant them the same privileges as I enjoy myself on the same conditions. I would be willing to grant them the ballot, the safety which was granted the negro.

The Congressman shot back: "According to your idea, would you regard it healthy for the rest of the country for paganism to become the order of the day in California?"

Healy responded: "Yes, sir; essentially so. Paganism is just as moral a religion as the religion which is now practiced in California, where the ministers of the gospel are stock-sharps and land-thieves, as the records of the city will prove." The Congressman, incredulous, then asked, "And if a majority of the population say that paganism should prevail, you would have paganism prevail?" "Yes, sir;" answered Healy, "that is the American system of government."¹⁸

The committee found Healy's testimony extraordinary and tried to catch him on some inconsistency or peculiarity. Aware of the paradoxical attitude many Americans held of damning the Chinese for not assimilating while fearing at the same time their intermarrying with whites, the Congressmen asked about miscegenation:

QUESTION: From your observation you think that the admixture of Mongolians with the American race would be rather advantageous than otherwise?

HEALY: Not necessarily advantageous; it is a neutral mixture. Everybody comes here for his own benefit.

The Chinese come here for their benefit; I came here for mine. The Jewish people will not mix with us. I very seldom hear of a Jewish maiden being married to an Irishman, and yet we find no fault with the Jews on that account.

QUESTION: You do not try to drive them out of the country?

HEALY: No, sir.

QUESTION: You would not approve of a cross between Irish and Mongolians?

HEALY: If it is their volition I would have nothing to put in the way of it; it would be an admirable cross.¹⁹

Healy was surely an unusual character whose testimony varied markedly from that of everyone else. Other Californians could not stress too strongly the importance of the issue of Chinese immigration. It is "the great question of the age," said William M. Haynie, large land-owning farmer and hop grower. "Its proportions can be scarcely overestimated by Congress." Merchant John Schaefer spoke for the vast majority of witnesses when he said: "I do not know one white man to-day who is in favor of Chinese coming here." T.B. Shannon, Collector of the Port of San Francisco, spoke for the rest of the city and state. "You have left us under the impression," a Congressman said near the end of Shannon's testimony, "that the conflict here is only between the white laborer and the Chinaman. I want to know if the rest of this community is in harmony on the Chinese question?" Shannon nodded. "I think it is pretty much a unanimous thing," he said. "You mean to say," asked a second Congressman, "that there is no class of American citizens in this city favorable to Chinese immigration?" "I

do not know of any;" Sherman answered, "if there is, I do not know of it."²⁰

Schaefer's and Shannon's comments were borne out two weeks later. Californians went to the polls on September 3, 1879, to elect the first slate of candidates under the new constitution. Practically every office was up for grabs: each Congressional seat, governor, lieutenant-governor, attorney general, the entire state legislature, the state supreme court, the railroad commission, and numerous mayors, city councils, and other local offices. Republicans captured three of the four Congressional seats, thus assuring a Republican majority (by state) in the House of Representatives should the upcoming presidential election be decided there. James Blaine likely helped secure the victory by his energetic efforts in the Senate seven months earlier; that his strategy seemed on target was indicated by the results of another item on the California ballot: a referendum on whether Chinese immigration should be prohibited. The three parties fielding candidates, Republican, Democrat, and Workingmen, all bore the words "Against Chinese Immigration" at the top of their tickets. "This is pronounced in emphatic language," the Boston Pilot noted, "even by the Conservative Republicans." More than 155,000 Californians cast ballots on the referendum, and the tally was 154,638 opposed to Chinese immigration, 883 in favor. With 99.4% of the voting electorate united, it may

have been the most lopsided election in American history. The sentiment of California was clear. Blaine had won the first round of the presidential sweepstakes of 1880.²¹

The California election received considerable attention in the East not because of the Chinese referendum but because of a dramatic assassination attempt on Isaac Kalloch, the Workingmen's candidate for mayor of San Francisco. Kalloch was a colorful character. A Baptist minister, he, like Beecher, had been charged with adultery years earlier. After a successful stint as a lawyer and rancher in Kansas, Kalloch moved to San Francisco and began preaching at the Metropolitan Temple, the largest Baptist church building in the nation. The temple housed libraries, reading rooms, two auditoriums, a lecture room, a gymnasium, and a nursery school. It also offered vocational courses for workers. At sermons Kalloch preached a democratic gospel that attacked the pretensions of the rich and the infallibility of the Bible. Workers embraced both him and his message, and Kalloch, a budding politician, endorsed the Workingmen's party in 1878. The party nominated him for mayor a year later. Blasted, like Kearney, as a demagogue-- "Pestiferous agitators," said one local clergyman--such attacks only made him dearer to the working classes.²²

During the campaign, Kalloch and Charles De Young, editor of the San Francisco Chronicle, the most widely-read newspaper on the West Coast, engaged in a series of

vituperative verbal attacks. De Young published the old allegations of Kalloch's adultery, and further charged him with seduction of minors and retaining a mistress. Kalloch returned the charges in kind, calling De Young's mother a whore. In revenge for this slight, De Young took his pistol and shot Kalloch on August 23. He fired two shots, the first hit Kalloch in the chest, the second in the thigh. With Kalloch bleeding profusely, the police took De Young into custody. The response among workers to the shooting was electric. "The news spread like fire," one observer commented, "men left their stores, their shops, and work benches; a universal cry went up for the life of the assassin De Young." People gathered in the streets and marched to City Hall to prevent De Young's escape. Simultaneously, a crowd of 20,000, "many ... carrying rifles and shot-guns," assembled at the sand lots. "The cry for vengeance was so loud and deep that it could not be ignored...." Workers' militia companies fetched arms and "held themselves in readiness for any emergency." Threats of "mob rule" and a working-class uprising reawakened fears of July 1877. General John McComb, commander of the state militia, telegraphed the Secretary of War in Washington that "'the city of San Francisco is threatened with riot ... it is necessary to have ammunition at once.'" The federal government moved swiftly. It rushed the navy into port, placed the army on alert, and authorized sending 50,000

cartridges to California. The Boston Pilot compared the scene to the "Reign of Terror" in the French Revolution; "The police," wrote the Irish World, "massed themselves at the City Hall behind Gattling guns in terror."²³

With the city on the verge of explosion, Denis Kearney cut short a trip to Vallejo and returned home. An "immense crowd," eager for action, met him at the wharf with a "tumultuous greeting." Kearney directed them to the sand lots. Ten minutes later the crowd reassembled, and, prepared for battle, awaited Kearney's words. The "Sand-Lot Orator" spoke briefly. He counseled patience and peace. Forbidding violence, he instructed workers to lay down their arms and disperse quietly. Kearney's appearance had a powerful effect. "One hour afterwards," the Irish World reported, "the streets were clear, order reigned, and the city saved from the terrible consequences of a riot." With the Workingmen on the brink of an electoral victory, Kearney wanted no violence to mar the campaign. Kearney's words defused the crowd, and San Francisco remained calm for the next week. It was Kearney's finest hour.²⁴

Isaac Kalloch survived his wounds and won the election. The Workingmen swept other local offices as well, including sheriff, auditor, tax collector, and district attorney. The party also elected seventeen assemblymen and eleven senators, outnumbering the Democrats in the state legislature. By successfully driving a wedge between the

two old parties, the Workingmen had become a force to be reckoned with in California, and the impact of their victory spilled into the East. Greenbackers recognized in the Workingmen a kindred spirit of disaffection and dismay at the emerging industrial order. As delegates to the New York Greenback Convention put it in late August, "we regard the workingmen's party of California as a sister organization and extend to it both hands of fellowship, believing that they, like ourselves, are arrayed against our common enemy--corporate monopolies, enjoying special privileges at the expense of impoverished labor."²⁵

Eastern Greenbackers hoped to capitalize on the Workingmen's success in the West by merging forces with them and guiding them toward Greenback principles. The key to transforming the Workingmen into Greenbackers, they believed, lay in converting Denis Kearney. His hold on California's working classes might indeed translate into votes. And Kearney was becoming respectable: in his new role of peacemaker, he had achieved a certain legitimacy. Even the staid New York Tribune had commended him for his actions in maintaining order after the Kalloch shooting. The Greenbackers now embraced him as one of their own. The National View, the party's new national organ based in Washington, D.C., praised him glowingly:

... we wish to compliment the wisdom and courage of the man who stands forth pre-eminently among his fellows in California--a man who heedless of ridicule, falsehood and persecution, has unflinchingly stood by the side of

toiling humanity in its struggle with the taskmasters; a man who has received the sneers of those kid-gloved Republicans whom nature has not endowed with brains enough to comprehend that one man of genius and patriotism in a struggle like this is worth a legion of the pseudo aristocrats graduated from our feeble mimicries of English colleges. Dennis Kearney has deserved well of working men of America. He has deserved especially well of California, and in the onward march of the people they will see to it that his name appears among the list of their chosen leaders.

Local Greenback clubs were equally profuse. In New York, Greenbackers declared Kearney "worthy of special recognition ... for the prudent and masterly manner in which he prevented bloodshed at a time when all admitted he had the destiny of property interests within his grasp...."

Baltimore Greenbackers commended him for his efforts "in behalf of the working people." A Greenbacker from Maine simply called him "the hero Kearney." In mid-September, Kearney wrote to the National View to say that he expected Greenbackers to sweep the presidential election in 1880.²⁶

With the alluring prospect of capturing California, Greenbackers formally reached out to Kearney in October. Party leader Hugo Preyer suggested holding a high-level planning conference in Washington to discuss the 1880 presidential campaign and national convention. He invited prominent Greenbackers Frank Dewees of Pennsylvania and Representative Thompson Murch of Maine to attend. He also invited Kearney. The idea of playing a role in national politics proved irresistible to the "Sand Lot Orator" and he accepted at once. Kearney, now a Greenbacker, would attend

the conference in the nation's capital and make his second tour of the East that winter.²⁷

The stream of events in the West--the new constitution, the state election campaign, and Kearney's "heroic" actions in August--drew praise from Eastern workers yet caused no stampede toward Chinese exclusion. In fact these highly-publicized events had virtually no impact at all on anti-Chinese sentiment. During the last week of August, when attention on Kearney and the campaign was reaching its peak, a completely different type of event occurred to the east: cigar makers white and Chinese went on strike together. Following a summer of strikes in various trades in the Midwest, St. Louis cigar makers met on August 19 to discuss calling a general work stoppage if employers failed to meet their demand for higher wages. Differences of opinion, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch reported, led to "acrimonious debate," but at the meeting's end, cigar makers narrowly approved a resolution to strike. About 300 workers joined the walkout. At a meeting two days later, a cigar maker informed the union "that a number of Chinamen working at the trade were desirous of joining the strike." Their number was small--only eight Chinese cigar makers plied their trade in St. Louis--but all eight determined to strike. Union members, familiar with the anti-Chinese arguments of their fellow craftsmen in California, discussed the proposition at

length. They voted in favor. On August 25, two days after the Kalloch shooting, "the invitation was extended, and promptly accepted by all the Chinamen...." They "left their shops, signed the cigar-makers' agreement, and joined the general strike." That night, one newspaper noted, the Chinese strikers attended a cigar-makers' mass meeting "and took a lively interest in the proceedings."²⁸

A local reporter interviewed one of the Chinese cigar makers a week later. "'Isn't it an unusual thing for the Chinese to strike?'" the reporter asked. "'Oh, no,'" replied Joe Pang Lung, whose responses were transcribed in dialect, "'in Tsina [China], in to Klafonda [California], most everywhere, Chinaman stlike.'" "'Do you mean to say,'" the reporter continued, "'that you have strikes in China?'" "'Oh, yes;'" Lung replied, "'hab got long time ago. Hab got everything in Tsina all same as here.'" When pressed by the reporter that the Chinese worked cheaply, Lung denied it. They demanded good wages, he insisted, and would remain on strike as long as necessary. "'Bimebye [bye and bye],'" he said, "'we catchee union plices we make cigars again.'"²⁹

Little more appeared in the press on the joint white-Chinese strike in St. Louis. Cigar makers focused on other concerns, such as scabs and picket lines, the importation of strikebreakers from other cities, and the union's attempt to raise money by sponsoring variety shows, ten-mile walking matches, and baseball games. Unlike the New York City cigar

makers' strike of 1877-78, the Chinese were simply considered part of the work force, unworthy of special notice. As the strike gained strength, St. Louis cigar makers adopted a union label to distinguish their products from those of non-members (unlike the West Coast union label which distinguished products by race). These various strategies worked; the strike succeeded. Several manufacturers caved in quickly, and others capitulated within a few weeks. Interethnic unity had carried the day.³⁰

The St. Louis strike was very much on the mind of Adolph Strasser when he delivered his keynote address to the annual meeting of the Cigar Makers' International Union in Buffalo in the first week of September. "COOLIE LABOR is a subject of vital importance," he told the delegates, "and requires your earnest consideration." Strasser, who had so clearly emphasized the distinction between immigration and importation when testifying before the Hewitt Committee a year earlier, chose his words carefully: "There is no doubt that unless importation is checked the whole country will be flooded in time...." Strasser highlighted the dangers of "imported ... slaves," but said nothing about immigration or restriction. His position had not changed. Even as Californians marched to the polls to vote almost unanimously for Chinese exclusion, Strasser hedged, unwilling to commit himself. "I am not ready to propose a remedy against this

growing evil," he informed his fellow cigar makers. San Franciscans, he believed, ought to be able to come up with the remedy themselves. But they hadn't yet. An appropriate solution, Strasser concluded, has "by no means [been] yet discovered...." The delegates agreed. They endorsed the president's speech and his comments on the Chinese, and then dropped the issue for more important subjects. To rank-and-file workers, such as those on strike in St. Louis, and to genuine working-class leaders, such as Strasser and fellow C.M.I.U. leaders, exclusion remained unappealing. As Chicago socialist John McAuliffe noted, American workers had to "'unite with ... the Chinese,'" for the labor problem, he said, was "'world-wide.'"³¹

The "world-wide" nature of class struggle may not have always dominated the American labor movement but it remained a powerful strand of working-class ideology, continually challenging tendencies toward ethnic and racial exclusiveness and countering the broadening national sentiment toward Chinese immigration restriction. Working-class poet Edward S. Creamer of Brooklyn may have summarized these ideals best in a poem composed for the Irish World in November:

Was he born in old England or Ireland?
Or in Scotland or Wales first breathed air?
Or in Germany, France, Spain, or Russia?
Or America, Asia, or where?
Is he Protestant, Catholic, neither?
An Idealist, or Brahmin-Hindoo?
Getting light from Confucius or Plato?
Or a Spiritist, Moslem, or Jew?

No, no! Men shall not ask for that.

Creed and race are rights in God's plan.

Slaves stand them on mountains of dust,

A man should be judged AS A MAN!³²

Creamer was not the only working-class poet. Chicago Socialist George M. Sloan also put his pen to verse. In a fantastic, macabre, two-hundred-page epic, Sloan contrasted imported Chinese laborers--

The basest form of breathing dust,
Whose food is vermin, love is lust...
Unnatural cross 'twixt sheep and lynx,
Whose dead is earthed, because he stinks;
A leprous wretch, damned in the womb,
Of manhood's hopes, a living tomb.

--with voluntary immigrants:

Welcome, O! Brothers, free Chinese,
Your equal law must give them peace,
Each freeman to your ranks will press,
He too 'pursues his happiness.'³³

Clearly both the ideal of human brotherhood and the distinction between importation and immigration still flourished in the American labor movement. Many workers in the East took these sentiments to heart. That fall, following the example set in St. Louis, cigar-maker John McCaffrey prepared to organize Chinese and Cuban workers in Philadelphia. Evidently, class solidarity could still overcome ethnic and racial barriers. The impetus for Chinese exclusion would have to come from somewhere else. After all the pressure from Washington and California during the course of the year, nothing much had changed. As an editorial in the Fall River Labor Standard put it in December 1879: "Whoever tries to divide the workers on

nationality is an enemy to Labor. The wage worker has no longer any interest in race issues. His fight is one for bread and butter which is alike to the French and Germans the English and the Irish, the Yankee and the Chinese."³⁴

A few days after the above editorial appeared in the Labor Standard, Denis Kearney embarked on his second tour of the East. It would be nothing like his first. Interviewed en route in Omaha and Chicago, Kearney identified himself as a Greenbacker and discussed the upcoming Washington conference. "'We'll talk over the Presidential campaign,'" he said, "'and see what's best to be done.'" Asked whom he would support, Kearney replied, "'I would accept any man who agrees with the Western sentiment on finance.'" The "'Chinese question,'" he added, was also important, but sounding more like a Greenbacker he stated: "'The financial problem will be the great issue of the next election.'" Spouting monetary and currency statistics, Kearney announced he would speak in the East "in favor of the greenback movement."³⁵

Kearney did indeed attend the Greenback-Labor conference on January 8, 1880, in Washington. The meeting's major accomplishment was planning the party's nominating convention for June 9 in Chicago. Denis Kearney's major accomplishment was being appointed one of the conference's several vice-presidents. Kearney objected that too many

people were receiving this title--one from each state--but fellow Greenbackers overruled him. On the second day of the conference Kearney delivered a brief speech. Stressing he was a Greenbacker, he urged thorough organization for the upcoming campaign. He reveled in denouncing the two major parties, calling the Republicans "iron-hoofed scoundrels who were shod in hell," and Democrats "tools of these scoundrels." He also cried "hang John Sherman," who as Secretary of the Treasury represented the nation's "hard-money" anti-greenback community. "There was no marked enthusiasm over this utterance," noted the Chicago Express, a Greenback journal, nor over much else that he said. "The general feeling in regard to his speech," the Express concluded, "... was one of disappointment. Kearney would make a better impression upon this side of the Rocky mountains ... if he would deal in reason and argument rather than in passionate and furious denunciation." The Chicago Times gave a different assessment. Remarking that Kearney managed to say "hell" fourteen times and "hang Sherman" seventeen times in fifteen minutes, the Times claimed that Kearney had whipped the crowd into a frenzy. "Dennis," the Times reported, "took his seat amid deafening applause." Whichever account one chooses to believe, one fact stands out: Kearney did not mention Chinese immigration.³⁶

Nor did he mention it at his single appearance on January 16 in New York City. Kearney spoke at Cooper Union

to what the New York Star called "a very good-humored crowd." The orator was in rare form. He attacked every individual, organization, and institution he could think of. He denounced Grant, Vanderbilt, C.P. Huntington, Cyrus Field, and the Rev. Dr. John Hall. He denounced Samuel Tilden as "'that political devil-fish with false teeth, false wig, false heart, or rather false gizzard, for he has no heart....'" Equally evil was railroad baron and financier Jay Gould, "the lean, lantern-jawed, lop-sided pelican--(loud laughter)--and shark snouted cormorant. Look at him as he crawls through Wall street, crunching the bones of his victims...." He attacked New York Herald publisher James Gordon Bennett and all the other "'journalistic pimps who edit these infernal doormats--I mean the newspapers--which are not fit to wipe a decent man's feet on. They are the mouthpieces of thieves and cut throats.'" Republican organizations and upper-class enclaves also came in for their share of abuse. Kearney attacked the Union League, the University Club, "and all the lazy, gluttonous feeble-tongued, long-eared, mouldy-headed vampires and small-brained lunch fiends." Then, in one catchall fusillade, he included everyone who might have escaped his wrath:

... monarchists, imperialists, murderers of the people, assassins of virtue and morality, land pirates, water sharks, gas thieves, plundering bloodhounds, manipulators of grain, blacklegs, thimble riggers, Peter Funks, perjured Judges, false swearers, blood-sucking shysters, [and] cancer-breeding editors....

Kearney closed his torrent with the specter of revolution. "'I have tried to stop it,'" he said. "'But patience may cease to be a virtue and then somebody's throat will be cut from ear to ear, and let me say ... that I don't care whose throat is cut, so long as it is not mine.'"37

Kearney did not disappoint. His rhetoric was harsh, outrageous, and familiar. The audience responded, as if at a sporting event, with cheers and applause. Like a boxer, Kearney gave abuse and took abuse. He swung and he jabbed, punching out his invisible yet ever-present opponent. Following prescribed rules of etiquette--he closed, for example, by quoting Sir Walter Scott, bidding spectators "'a fair good night and rosy dreams and slumbers light'"--he still managed to draw blood. As an entertainer, comedian, and demagogue, Kearney vocalized the pent-up anger and frustration many workers no doubt felt but in day-to-day living could not vent. Kearney's spectacles were forums of release, a way of publicly "sticking it" to one's boss. How representative such spectacles were of working-class sentiment remains problematic. As one of his targets, the New York Herald, commented (and no doubt wanted to believe), "The audience was more amused than moved, and went away with more memories of a good time than convictions."38

Kearney's style of invective had not changed much since his tour in 1878 but the political climate had. The return of prosperity in the closing year of the decade coupled with

Congressional commitment to Chinese immigration restriction had created a new atmosphere. No longer was the nation convulsed by the fear of revolution; no longer was Kearney deemed the spark that could ignite insurrection. No red scare saturated the media, no threat of a labor uprising hovered over the nation. Without a political hurricane, Kearney was simply hot air. Consequently his tour of 1880 received none of the attention from the press or the public that had greeted his first tour sixteen months earlier. The simultaneous arrival in the East of Irish nationalist Charles Stewart Parnell completely overshadowed Kearney's presence and further reduced the once-feared "California Communist" to a sideshow attraction.³⁹

Kearney was old news, and the mainstream press practically ignored him. So did the labor press. "Dennis Kearney, the California agitator," the Paterson Labor Standard noted (misspelling his name), "addressed a large audience in the Cooper Institute, New York, the other day." So much for the Labor Standard's coverage.⁴⁰ Other labor journals were similarly brief. So were most working-class organizations. When Kearney visited Washington, the National Workingmen's Assembly never even acknowledged his presence.⁴¹ Although resurrected by his triumphs of the preceding year, Kearney's new-found ties to the Greenbackers made him suspect to many workers and Socialists. Perhaps he was, after all, just another politician. Other important

differences marked Kearney's second tour from his first. Gone were the processions that greeted his arrival. Gone too were the standard resolutions for his listeners to "unanimously" endorse at each meeting's conclusion. Perhaps most significant, Chinese immigration was relegated to the background. The issue, novel in 1878, had become divisive among workers in 1880, and tirades against the Chinese disappeared from Kearney's Eastern repertoire. In his two-hour Cooper Union address, if accounts from the New York Tribune, Sun, Star, Herald, and Irish World are to be believed, Kearney denounced everything under the sun but ignored the Chinese. Kearney delivered two speeches in Chicago in late January, and again the Chinese went unmentioned. In his new role as Greenback spokesman in national affairs Kearney had to be more careful in his utterances. Seeking to broaden rather than narrow his constituency in the East, Kearney consciously avoided raising the issue of Chinese exclusion. He had at last come to realize the indifference--or divisiveness--that the issue generated among workers east of the Rockies and he preferred to cultivate his new political image while cementing his place in the Greenback-Labor hierarchy.⁴²

California, however, was different. Kearney returned home in February and spent part of the next two months in Sacramento lobbying for anti-Chinese legislation. The newly-inaugurated Mayor Kalloch, meanwhile, had urged San

Francisco's board of health to investigate disease and overcrowding in Chinatown, in hopes that an adverse report would sanction its demolition. The board complied and issued a report calling Chinatown a "nuisance" that must be "abated." Exactly when and by whom, however, remained unclear. The Board of Supervisors failed to act, so "sand-lotters" seized the initiative. They marched en masse to factories around the city demanding employers dismiss all Chinese laborers. A few actually complied. Kearney, elated by events, shuttled back to San Francisco to rally the troops and was joined in the sand lots by speakers more incendiary than himself. One of them, Anna F. Smith, urged "the hanging on lamp posts of half a dozen or more of the cigar manufacturers." Another rabble-rouser, L.J. Gannon, foresaw a holocaust in which "the city will be levelled to ashes and the ruins filled with roasted bodies within twenty-four hours."⁴³

Tensions rapidly escalated to the level of the preceding August. Rumors of assassination and revolution filled the air, and the rumors traveled east. "[A]n earthquake of excitement is heaving beneath this city," a California minister wrote the Cincinnati Enquirer, "and threatening to engulf the Chinese, and popular indignation may storm our pavements with the blood of unreasoning vengeance...." Other journals carried similar warnings.

"The Sans-Culottes," flashed a headline in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch in March:

The agitation which was begun and carried on for a long time ostensibly for the discouragement of Chinese immigration has degenerated into a carnival of impudent, blasphemous threatenings against life and property and vilifications of private character, until it has become the scandal of the time and brought dishonor upon American civilization. So long as its agitation was confined to its original purpose it proceeded without objection, for the people of California recognized the evils of Chinese immigration and united to oppose it by lawful means....

Just as Congressmen dealing with the issue wrangled over the method (legislation v. treaty revision) and not the goal (immigration restriction), Californians differed over means (violence v. non-violence) and not ends (exclusion). And Kearney made the most of it. Shedding his new image as a man of restraint, he now claimed he was prepared for martyrdom. He inflamed his rhetoric, accelerated his attacks, and proposed building a gallows on the sand lots. "'If I hear of any man plotting to kill me,'" he cried, "'I will kill him so help me God.'" The old Kearney was back. But soon he would be behind bars. For uttering these words, Kearney was arrested a few days later.⁴⁴

The powder-keg atmosphere in San Francisco, highlighted by threats of terror and resolutions to demolish Chinatown, led to the first general exodus of Chinese workers from California. They began heading east over the Rockies in late February. "Two car-loads of Chinamen" passed through St. Louis on the last day of the month, one newspaper

reported, and more Chinese followed in early March. They fanned out across the North, heading for cities in Illinois, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York. About seventy-five Chinese landed in Jersey City, New Jersey, and claimed many more would be following. The New York Star predicted 600 Chinese were crossing the country, the Herald put the figure much higher. Even the staid New York Times agreed that more were on the way.⁴⁵

This anticipated influx prompted an outpouring of support from wealthy society women in the East. To them the newcomers represented a solution to a vexing problem: the Chinese would "supplant ... the incompetent order of servants who have so long cursed our cities." For several weeks a flurry of letters in the New York Herald attacked Irish, German, Mexican, and black domestics for their alleged deficiencies and trumpeted the Chinese as welcome replacements.⁴⁶ Ladies' associations descended on Mott Street, the heart of New York's Chinatown, "in quest of Chinese servants." Mrs. Timothy Sargent, a leading advocate of the scheme, touted the Chinese highly and planned to open a Chinese Aid and Emigration Society in Manhattan. "'We are just on the verge of flooding New York and its suburbs with Chinese,'" she told a reporter on March 10. The "property holders," she insisted, would back her. Mrs. Sargent had grand plans. She suggested building "an immense washhouse at Saratoga and several other watering places" upstate to

cater to the needs of wealthy vacationers. A colleague intended hiring only Chinese workmen to oversee her husband's estate and proposed having "all the hotels at Lake George hire Chinese domestics for the coming season." Sargent did not stop there. She foresaw a vast market for Chinese laborers in the East and claimed to be "receiving hundreds of letters daily from manufacturers and others who were anxious to preclude all possibility of strikes by the employment of cheap and reliable Chinese workmen." The "benefits" of such workmen were common knowledge. "'Any one who has had dealings with the Celestials knows perfectly well that they are infinitely superior to the average white laborer,'" she said. Sargent then proceeded to list some of the applicants who had contacted her: woolen and cotton manufacturers in Massachusetts; corporations in Long Island; a New York gas company; bonnet-making, chair-making, and box-making firms; and the Jockey Club race-course near Coney Island. "It is likely," she said, "that 5,000 Chinamen will be brought East to engage in various labors." And this was only the beginning. "It will be an easy matter," she explained, "to secure special rates and pay the fares of 100 or 200 at a time, as the case may be." With sufficient capital, she concluded, the supply was endless, and

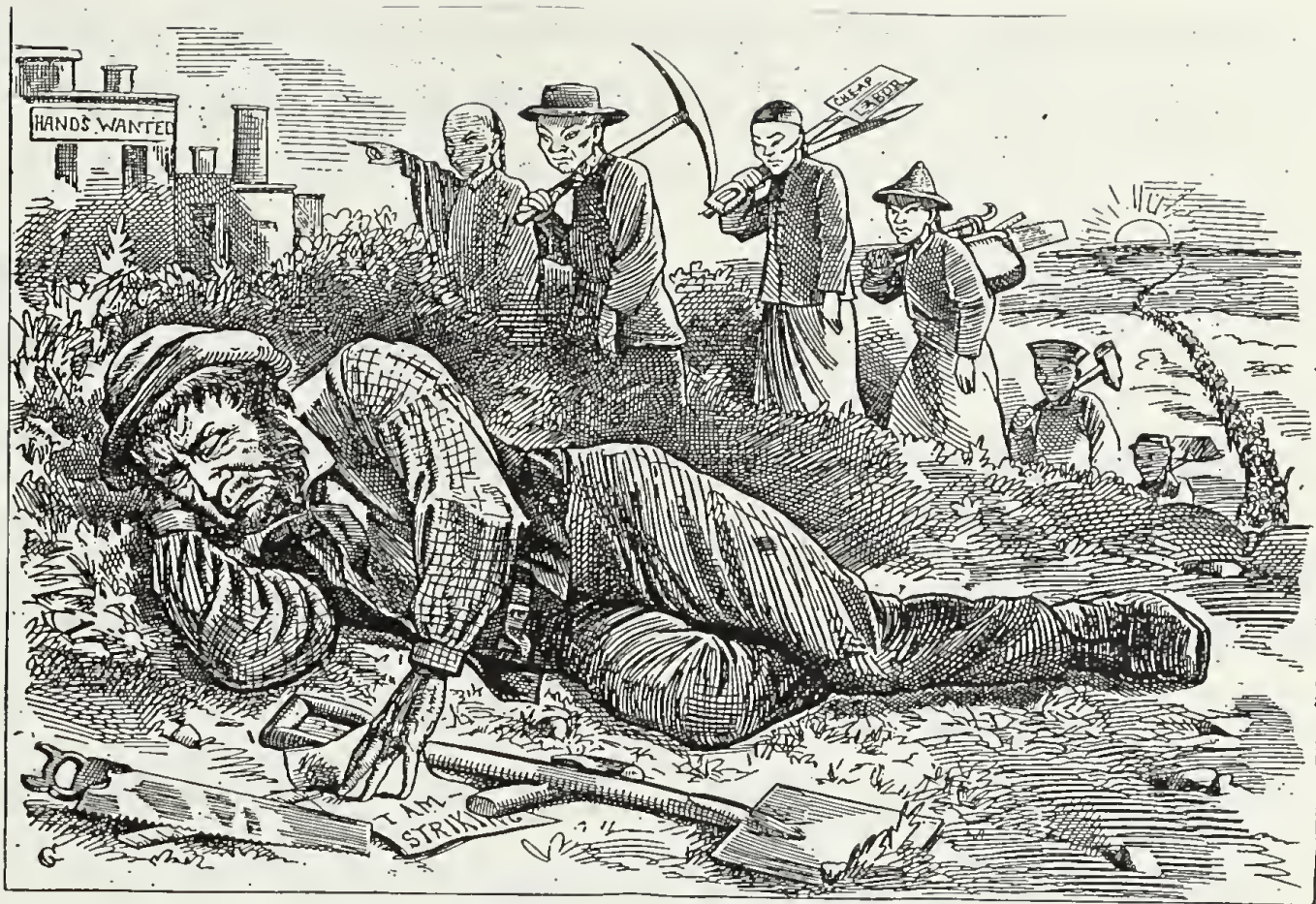
the Mongolians will fairly swarm here. Their neatness and economy will soon win them favors in the cultured East, and the time is not far off when New York manufacturers will be glad to send to China direct for recruits to their workshops.

Sargent pulled no punches: "the Chinese wave was advancing," she declared, "... and incompetence would be swept away from the workshops and factories to make room for the industrious little brown people...."⁴⁷

Workers' worst nightmares seemed to be coming true. The importation of servile labor--precisely what workers had warned of and protested against for the past decade--was now being advocated and discussed openly. The whole scheme was laid out for all to see. Deals were in the works and contracts on the verge of being signed, according to Sargent, to import Chinese laborers to the East. And once the Chinese arrived, Sargent explained, manufacturers would "dismiss their white workmen." Other developments lent credence to Sargent's scheme. The same week she introduced her plan, Gifford F. Parker, a prominent businessman long engaged in trade with China, delivered a lecture in New York City. Praising the Chinese for their "many excellent traits," he described in detail their method of immigration: In exchange for passage to America the Chinese agreed to work five years for a contractor, and to insure compliance, friends back home posted bonds as collateral. Once in San Francisco, the Chinese headed straight for Chinatown, Parker said, where "they remained until they were sublet at from \$30 to \$40 a month each...." The next day, Sam Quong, a newly-arrived immigrant in the East, told a New York Times reporter virtually the same thing: that the Chinese were

imported to America under contract for a set number of years. And finally, the New York Herald reported in March, Henry F. Scharrett, a Mississippi planter, had corresponded with one of the Six Companies in San Francisco and planned to import Chinese laborers to the South "in a few weeks."⁴⁸

Each day seemed to bring a new charge, a new rumor. People from different backgrounds--Sargent, Parker, Quong, Scharrett--were saying essentially the same thing. There may have been little truth to their statements, but no one could be sure, and in the end it really didn't matter. The fact was, such claims were being made. They were being made by the high and by the lowly, independently and simultaneously. These claims were receiving wide notice. And they weren't being denied. The message to workers was clear: You are replaceable, and your replacements are ready. Waiting in the wings to take their jobs lay a vast group of laborers whom employers could pay less and work longer. Employers seemed poised to hire them. And one indisputable fact lent support to all the rumors: several hundred Chinese were indeed crossing the plains and coming east. The working classes, many felt, had no one to blame but themselves. As a cartoon in McGee's Illustrated Weekly, a middle-class Irish-American journal, made clear, workers had brought on the problem themselves. [See figure 9.1] By being both lazy and greedy and by striking one time too



STRIKES AND THEIR RESULTS—WHILE THE STRIKER IS SLEEPING, CHEAP LABOR FROM THE EAST IS FILLING THE WORKSHOPS.—PAGE 355.

Figure 9.1. As the Irish striker sleeps, an endless stream of Chinese workers pours into the East. Note the variety of Chinese hats and tools, suggesting the variety of jobs the Chinese could fill.

Source: McGee's Illustrated Weekly, April 1880.

many, workers alone had precipitated the Chinese influx. If workers didn't fall into line quickly their jobs would be taken. Employers had no choice but to seek other labor.⁴⁹

How did workers respond? In Chicago this explosive combination of threats and reality led to the first full-blown working-class anti-Chinese meeting east of the Rocky Mountains. On March 15, workers, Socialists, members of the Trades and Labor Council, and "friends of liberty" gathered in Meridan Hall to denounce the arrival of Chinese immigrants to Chicago and Chinese immigration in general. The meeting, the Chicago Times noted, "was quite largely attended." P.H. McLogan, a printer, served as chairman and attacked the Chinese for their habits, religion, and alleged inability to assimilate. "America could not afford to let her workingmen become the victims of cooly ignorance and contagion," he said, nor be placed "in degrading competition with the Mongolian locusts who would devour the prosperity of the land." A.B. Adair spoke in a similar vein, decrying "the Chinese element" and the "system of cooly slave-labor." Sounding much like Kearney, whose name he invoked, Adair stated:

If the invasion from Chinatown continued in spite of protest on the part of the working people it might become necessary to erect a gallows on the Chicago "sand-lots" and hang those who persisted in polluting the moral atmosphere of the metropolis of the northwest....

When Kearney and his followers said "The Chinese must go," it was not intended they should leave San

Francisco to curse with their presence cities further eastward. It was intended that they should return whence they came, and back they must go before the force of American public opinion. Chicago could not afford to tolerate such a plague in her bosom.

Adair went on at great length assaulting the Chinese and threatening violence. Workers would take to the streets, he declared, to drive them out: "before decent white labor was degraded, the streets of Chicago must be strewn with the bodies and crimsoned with the blood of workingmen (Great applause.)"⁵⁰

In his harangue, Adair paused to emphasize the difference between immigration and importation. Workers "did not fight the Chinese because they were Mongols," he said, "but because they were slaves." As one reporter noted, Adair "did not oppose Chinese emigration to this country, but they could come as other foreigners come seeking a livelihood--[as] free men." Workers applauded these sentiments but they were quickly overpowered by other speakers. Orris A. Bishop called the Chinese "dirty," "degraded," and "leprous." Just as cheap labor had "destroyed the glory and prosperity" of ancient Egypt, he said, it now threatened to destroy America. Richard Powers, the next speaker, warned of increasing violence. After driving the Chinese out of Chicago, he said, "they [the workingmen] would drive them to New York--to the jumping-off place. If they do not go into the sea they would make them take the river. (Cheers and laughter.)" Powers, the

Chicago Times reported, "was ready to back his words, and he believed most of his hearers felt the same. (Cheers and a voice--"You bet.")" One last speaker, a Mr. Buckley, "attacked the trade in cooly labor rather than the Chinese as a race." Still, he counseled exclusion.⁵¹

Chinese immigration was not the only issue on the agenda. Speakers also addressed child labor and convict labor. Two speakers, in fact, argued that these dangers threatened the working classes far more than did the Chinese. Bishop remarked "that convict labor was the cooly labor of the United States," while Buckley called child labor the "most horrible feature of all." Despite these comments, the Chinese remained at center stage. At the meeting's conclusion listeners approved three anti-Chinese resolutions invoking the cause of freedom and the Civil War, denouncing the competition of cheap labor, and urging the city council to both "quarantine" the Chinese entering Chicago and protect citizens "from the loathsome contagion germane to this degraded and slavish race." The meeting adjourned with leaders planning to hold a second anti-Chinese rally later in the month.⁵²

Finally, four years after Aaron Sargent had condemned Chinese immigration on the Senate floor and both major parties had written anti-Chinese clauses into their national platforms, two years after the President and Congress had agreed to renegotiate the Burlingame Treaty so as to limit

Chinese immigration, and one year after Senator James Blaine had spearheaded the drive to restrict Chinese immigration which Congress then endorsed, workers east of the Rocky Mountains held their first full-fledged meeting to demand Chinese exclusion. For ten years workers in the East had carefully and consistently emphasized the distinction between immigration and importation. For ten years their distinctions had virtually fallen on deaf ears. At last, in March 1880, almost ten full years after North Adams, workers in Chicago clearly crossed the line--as they had momentarily one year earlier--from anti-importation to anti-immigration. And workers, as their comments reveal, could be just as vicious as the politicians who had led the charge. The evidence is stark. Historians need look no further to find proof of Chinese exclusion sentiment among the working classes. Historians would err, however, in concluding that such sentiment was either foremost or broad-based among workers. The Chicago meeting of March 15, like the May meeting of 1879, stands out as both a ground-breaking event and as a notable exception. It was never followed up. Despite plans, no second meeting took place. A few days after the March 15 meeting, Chicago organizers wired their brethren on the East Coast to urge that "a simultaneous meeting of protest against Chinese cheap labor [be] held in New York." Working-class leaders in the nation's largest city demurred. Although anti-Chinese dispatches poured in

from Chicago, "they have not," a correspondent to the Chicago Times reported, "elicited a favorable response. The trades unions feel that with the present strikes on their hands they have enough to do without agitating the Chinese question...."⁵³

New York was indeed reeling from a wave of strikes and union activity in late winter and early spring 1880. Cabinetmakers, box-makers, and upholsterers were striking; shoemakers, tailors, encaustic tile layers, and fresco and house painters threatened to strike; clothing cutters, journeyman lathers, and molders and brass finishers held meetings to begin organizing their trades. Returning prosperity spurred action and working-class militancy erupted throughout the East. The strike wave engulfed puddlers and zinc miners in Pennsylvania, cigar makers in Cincinnati, and thousands of millworkers in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, New Jersey, and upstate New York. The wave also inundated the Midwest and South as strikes broke out in St. Louis, New Orleans, and Chattanooga. Even as Chinese workers began arriving en masse from California and threats of large-scale importation blazed through the press, workers remained unintimidated. They continued striking and showed no signs of wavering. Workers, in fact, despite appeals from Chicago, appeared singularly unconcerned with Chinese immigration. In St. Louis, for example, where Chinese had arrived at the beginning of the month, little protest

surfaced. At a mass meeting one week after Chicago's meeting, workers implored their senators and representatives to pass legislation in their interest. They demanded that Congress create a national bureau of labor statistics and enforce the eight-hour law of 1868. They said nothing concerning Chinese immigration.⁵⁴

And still the Chinese kept coming. "The Mongolian is taking his queue and going Eastward," quipped the Chicago Daily News. "Will New York evoke a DENIS KEARNEY?" The answer, in a word, was no. Workers in the East scarcely acknowledged their arrival. No protest emerged. And on the one occasion when the subject of Chinese immigration did arise working-class response contrasted sharply with that expressed in Chicago. Employer response also challenges the popular wisdom of who feared and who didn't fear Chinese immigration. The most important strike of the season occurred in the pianomaking industry in New York. Demanding a 10% wage hike, several hundred employees at Steinway & Son walked off the job in late February. Steinway refused to give in and for three weeks the strike was a stand-off. Then, on March 15, in a display of employer solidarity, eighteen other piano manufacturing firms in New York instituted a lockout. Overnight 4,000 pianomakers were thrown out of work. Their struggle quickly became the centerpiece of the winter-spring strike wave. Other unions

extended sympathy to the pianomakers and the Socialists held a ball to raise funds.⁵⁵

On March 16, a day after the lockout (as well as Chicago's anti-Chinese meeting), "young Mr. Haines" of Haines Brothers' piano factory announced he had been approached "by parties representing capitalists of the Pacific coast." They had informed him he could have as many Chinese workers as he wanted, at fifty to seventy-five cents a day. Except for a few highly-skilled tasks, he was told, the Chinese could learn the trade in thirty days. Haines passed on the proposal to fellow manufacturers who met in conference that day. The response was immediate and unanimous. "'I don't want to bother with a lot of Chinese,'" one "prominent" manufacturer said, "'I hate 'em worse than the devil!'" "[T]his sentiment," the New York Times remarked, "was reiterated by others." A second manufacturer stated: "[']We do not want any alien Asiatics here. I would rather pay white men more money.'" A third feared the social effects of introducing another race. "'We'll be getting so many Chinamen,'" he said, "'that the amalgamation will become serious.'" And a fourth manufacturer simply said, "'I'm dead against the mixture.'" Mr. Tredbar, a Steinway executive, called the proposal "'nonsense ... rubbish ... and humbug.... We don't want any Chinese, and won't have them at any price.'" And William Steinway himself, the company's ruling patriarch, dismissed

the idea for purely practical reasons: "no manufacturer would entertain the idea for a moment, as the business took many years to learn, and not even the imitative skill of the Chinese could acquire its peculiarities in a short time."⁵⁶

The pianomakers, no doubt in accord with Steinway's assessment, dismissed the rumor without a worry. The union, in fact, issued a statement the following day restating their demands and did not even acknowledge the proposed threat. As the New York Sun reported, "The men affect to treat the story ... to employ cheap Chinese labor with great indifference." The proposal, the Times added, "was much talked of among the men, but no one seemed to be at all alarmed." Workers just didn't care. But they were amused. "'The Chinese!'" exclaimed one union leader. "'Why we've all had a good laugh over that.'" And another worker remarked with a swagger, "the Chinese will be good for washing their dirty aprons and cleaning the glue from the handles of their tools."⁵⁷

The contrast between manufacturers and workers could not have been more stark. In this one incident employers feared and opposed the Chinese far more than their employees. Even as the "Buddhist rabble," as one magazine put it, arrived in the East and Chicago labor leaders implored their brethren in New York to agitate against them, little opposition or hostility surfaced. New York evoked no

Denis Kearney. And whatever antagonism existed continued to be directed against manufacturers who imported the Chinese, not the Chinese themselves. Just a few weeks earlier, Henri Drury of the Stonecutters' Union had introduced a resolution at a carpenters meeting denouncing capitalists on Rockaway Beach in Queens for "Scouring the Far West and Canada for pauper labor." This "pauper labor" surely included the Chinese, but Drury did not single them out. He attacked the importers and not the imported. Perhaps a recent strike by white and Chinese laborers at a shirt factory in Mount Vernon, New Jersey, had helped temper working-class attitudes. "The strikers," the Fall River Labor Standard noted, "were mostly Chinamen." And as in St. Louis, white-Chinese solidarity paid off: workers won the strike. "As soon as the Chinaman understands that the white people will stand by him," the Labor Standard remarked in February, "he will stand up for his wages. Bread and butter is alike to all nationalities."⁵⁸

To workers the enemy was clear: the danger came from above not from below. And the assault from above continued. On March 27, Congress released its report on the causes of the depression in business and labor based on the testimony taken the previous summer and fall. In no uncertain terms it attacked the Chinese and recommended immigration restriction. A few days later Representative Hendrick B.

Wright, who had chaired the committee, addressed an audience at Cooper Union in New York. He attacked the Chinese ruthlessly for all the familiar reasons, highlighting the contrasts in customs, religion, and race. "Chinese immigration, he said, "humiliates" the nation:

The Caucasian race that has landed upon our shores from Europe, come here because they are in affinity with our Government to pay taxes and fight our battles. And I plead for that emigration till my blood ceases to vibrate. The Caucasian blood is our blood; his mind vibrates with the same feelings and impulses. To him I would open the gates forever, but I would close the golden gates of California upon the pagan race that worships a Pagan God.

The Congressman did not equivocate. "We cannot afford in this country to have the proud Caucasian race mixed up with such trash as that." Wright's audience may well have consisted of Greenbackers (who organized the meeting) and workers, but working-class response was nil.⁵⁹ Even as New York City's Chinese population swelled into the thousands in early 1880, workers did not protest.⁶⁰ The only opposition that surfaced in New York came from landlords. In a futile attempt to prevent the growth of Chinatown (also called "New China") in the city's notorious Five Points district, local landlords tried to evict Chinese residents from their homes and refused to either rent or sell to them. Workers did not join the charge.⁶¹

Amid the events of early 1880--Kearney's visit, the Chinese exodus, Sargent's scheme for importation, the pianomakers' walkout, the strike wave in New York and the

East, and the release of the Congressional report--workers had ample cause and opportunity to protest Chinese immigration. They did so once, in Chicago. Elsewhere workers exhibited little if any interest in the subject. Working-class agitation continued throughout the spring, however, and culminated in a series of meetings in April and May. These meetings, like those held a year earlier, were motivated by events in California and presented one final and ideal forum for workers to express their views on Chinese immigration. By early spring affairs in San Francisco had reached a fever pitch climaxing with the arrest of Denis Kearney in March. The court charged him with using "vulgar and threatening language," a misdemeanor, in one of his sand lot diatribes. A hostile judge sentenced him to six months in prison and a \$1,000 fine. Kearney filed an appeal but lost, and in April he went to jail.⁶²

Kearney's imprisonment sparked protest in the East. Even mainstream journals denounced the sentence, while workers held loud "indignation meetings" in Boston, Brooklyn, and Manhattan. The content of these meetings is most illuminating. Kearney's rhetoric and anti-Chinese message received minimal attention as workers focused on the issue of freedom of speech. Speaker after speaker concentrated on the judge's assault on Kearney's First Amendment rights. In Brooklyn, for example, P.D. Murray

argued that "Kearney was imprisoned because he simply asserted his right to free speech as an American citizen." Citing the Declaration of Independence for authority, Murray stated that Kearney's arrest was an "outrage" to all Americans. Other speakers reiterated this theme. Alexander R. Robb claimed that Kearney "was imprisoned for sticking up for the workingmen," while a Dr. Harlan noted that "Kearney was sent to jail [simply] because he called people thieves."⁶³

John Swinton stated these sentiments somewhat more eloquently. "In the wrong done to Kearney, we are all wronged;" he informed listeners in Boston, "in the suffering endured by him, we are all sufferers; in the violation of his rights, the rights of every American citizen are violated; in the sacrifice of his liberty, the liberties of the whole country are imperilled." Swinton attacked the legal system--the "legal sham"--and "the atrocious judges" who "crucify justice." Speakers compared the imprisonment of Kearney with that of Joseph P. McDonnell, editor of the Paterson Labor Standard, who was serving time in the Passaic County jail. (He had been convicted of libel merely for exposing rotten working conditions in a local New Jersey brickyard.) Workers saw the two arrests as part of a larger plan to muzzle the labor movement. "The attack made on Kearney in California and McDonnell in New Jersey," Laurence Gronlund told the audience in Boston, "are the first overt

acts of rebellion by the capital of this country."

Resolutions echoed these sentiments. "[We] resent with the utmost indignation and scorn this manifest violation of the sacred right of free speech," one Boston resolution read. Others denounced "the tyrannous action of the courts and the judges in California and New Jersey," and

That in this aggression of the legal and judicial authorities ... upon the liberties of the people ... we are brought face to face for the first time with the defiant and insolent form which tyranny assumes in the nineteenth century--the tyranny of an oligarchy of corrupt, unprincipled and unscrupulous capitalists....⁶⁴

Orators at these meetings spoke at length on the right of free speech, a liberty Kearney had been denied. Orators invariably discussed Kearney himself, his "crime," his character, and his cause. The distinctions they made deserve scrutiny. William G.H. Smart, in calling to order the meeting in Boston, stressed that they had gathered only to protest the violation of Kearney's rights. They had not come to endorse his ideas. This comment led one speaker to dissent. At once, "Mr. Smart objected, on the ground that the meeting was composed of persons who agreed in regard to the protest against Kearney's imprisonment, but did not coincide in sentiment as to the objects or methods of his agitation." A dispute erupted among both the orators and the audience. Smart's position ultimately carried the day. The resolutions issued by the meeting emphasized free speech, workers' rights, and the wrong inflicted on Kearney.

The resolutions took pains, however, to state that "differences of opinion may exist among us as to Denis Kearney as a man" and that "this meeting does not feel called upon to express any opinion in regard to the immediate object of Mr. Kearney's agitation...."⁶⁵

Workers, in other words, had reached no consensus on the restriction of Chinese immigration. The seven lengthy resolutions adopted at the Boston meeting never mentioned the Chinese, immigration restriction, or exclusion. Nor did the resolutions adopted in Brooklyn and New York. Orators, to be sure, sprinkled their speeches with derogatory references to "Chinese slaves" and the "peculiar form of their emigration" but they did not make immigration restriction an aim of the meetings or even connect the issue to the working classes. Tailor Robert Blissert, founder of the New York Central Labor Union, stated this clearly. "He did not think it right to forbid any of God's creatures from coming to America," he told an enthusiastic crowd at Cooper Union. Blissert, one of the working-class leaders who had boldly welcomed Chinese immigrants to America in 1870, had not changed his position in the course of the decade. He "opened [his speech] by saying that he did not agree with all of Dennis Kearney's doctrines," the Irish World reported. "He was not opposed to Chinese immigration.... What he was opposed to was the Importation of Slaves.

(Applause.)" Of the eight speakers who followed none modified Blissert's position.⁶⁶

These spring meetings climaxed four months of intense working-class agitation. Provoked by Kearney's arrest, the protest rallies presented ample opportunity for workers and working-class leaders to express their demands relative on Chinese immigration. (No one, after all, was more closely identified with the anti-Chinese movement than Kearney.) And yet workers chose not to. They chose rather to defend their civil liberties and the rights of labor against capital. They did not choose to protest against the Chinese. It was yet another opportunity not taken. As on previous occasions--such as testifying before Congress in 1878 and 1879--most workers failed to cross the line or cast the first stone. Even when bombarded with a barrage of threats that could have easily justified a call for exclusion, the overwhelming majority of workers hedged, sidestepped the subject, laughed at it, or came out like Blissert in favor of Chinese immigration. A consensus was still lacking, and with rare exceptions, the issue remained in the background. Even more than Roach's tour of 1876, Kearney's swing east in 1878, and the working-class victories in California in 1879, the events of the opening months of 1880 could well have ignited a firestorm of anti-Chinese hysteria in the East. But they didn't. Although

Chinese immigrants were crossing the Rockies in considerable numbers for the first time and reports of importing thousands appeared openly, the labor movement remained on the sidelines, observing rather than acting. Despite all the threats and pressures few workers broke ranks. As in the past, a greater vision still prevailed, a vision of working-class solidarity that overcame differences of race and ethnicity.

At the height of the fervor in March, labor leader George Gunton addressed a large audience of factory workers in Manchester, New Hampshire. He lashed out at both capitalists and capitalism. Near the end of his speech he noted that French Canadians and Chinese immigrants were coming to the Northeast to find jobs. They could live cheaply, he said, and work for low wages. "They do this," he explained, "because they are poor, as their poverty is greater than your own, if that is possible." Gunton suggested neither restriction or exclusion. "I believe," he concluded, perhaps thinking of the joint white-Chinese strikes in St. Louis and New Jersey, "there should be no nationality in the Labor movement, no city, no state, no country, but let all united stand. (Applause.)"⁶⁷

These words of Gunton and those of Blissert should be kept in mind when considering the larger picture. As everyone knew, 1880 was an election year. Anything workers said, anything they demanded, was destined to receive far

more attention than if expressed at any other time. Candidates jockeying for support and politicians framing platforms were especially sensitive to the cries of the disgruntled, at least those representing large voting blocs. Workers were well aware that while their demands might not be heeded their voices would be heard. Their speeches, their resolutions, and their manifestoes would at least be noticed. Confident of a larger audience, workers could have used the events of early 1880 as a springboard for Chinese exclusion. But they did not. Despite coaxing from above and bullying from the West, the attitudes of workers had remained remarkably consistent for more than ten full years.

Politicians had a different agenda. The bipartisan consensus expressed both in the party platforms of 1876 and the vote on the Fifteen Passenger Act in 1879 had grown stronger. And in a matter of weeks, following the last of the Kearney protest meetings in the East in May, politicians would regain the national spotlight. All three political conventions--Republican, Democratic, and Greenback--were to meet in June. The nominations were still up for grabs. No one knew in any party who the candidates would be. But on the restriction of Chinese immigration there was little disagreement in the two major parties. Working-class indifference no longer mattered. As the politicians and platforms would soon make clear, Chinese exclusion was only

a matter of time. The issue would play an exciting and starring role in the coming campaign, and the election of 1880 would result in a resounding victory for bigotry.

NOTES

1. Carl Brent Swisher, Motivation and Political Technique in the California Constitutional Convention 1878-79 (Claremont, Cal.: Pomona, 1930), p. 109.

2. The California Constitution of 1879 is readily available. See, for example, Edward F. Treadwell, ed., The Constitution of the State of California (San Francisco: Bancroft-Whitney, 1923). For a different interpretation of the 1879 charter, see Alexander Saxton, The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California (Berkeley: University of California, 1971), pp. 127-32. Saxton's emphasis on the moderateness of the new charter is persuasive on first glance, but does not explain its overwhelming endorsement by radicals and Socialists across the country, for which, see below. For background on the constitution, see Swisher, Motivation and Political Technique in the California Constitutional Convention 1878-79; James Bryce, The American Commonwealth (New York: Macmillan, 1905), I, pp. 711-24, II, pp. 437-42.

3. New York Tribune, May 16, 1879, p. 5; New York World, May 16, 1879, p. 8; New York Herald, May 16, 1879, p. 4. For positive attitudes toward the new California Constitution by New York Socialist Justus Schwab and comrades, see Chicago Times, May 10, 1879, p. 5.

4. New York Herald, May 22, 1879, p. 3; New York Tribune, May 23, 1879, p. 8; Irish World, May 31, 1879, p. 5.

5. Boston Globe, May 24, 1879, p. 1, August 28, 1879, p. 2.

6. Chicago Socialist, May 24, 1879, p. 1; Chicago Times, May 19, 1879, p. 5. In the main quote praising Kearney, the Times version substituted the term "working people" for "workingmen."

7. See, for example, New York Herald, April 12, 1879, p. 8; Philadelphia Trades, April 19, 1879, p. 2; Chicago Times, May 6, 1879, p. 2. On the westward migration of blacks, see Nell Irvin Painter, Exodusters: Black Migration to Kansas After Reconstruction (New York, 1981).

8. Boston Globe, March 18, 1879, p. 4, March 31, 1879, p. 2, April 4, 1879, p. 2. The Globe noted one attack on a Chinese resident by a pair of "brutes," and added: "these assailants were probably new comers who perhaps had come from the slums of San Francisco, and for a moment forgot

where they were.... The 'hoodlum' element is comparatively very small in Boston."

9. Chicago Socialist, March 29, 1879, p. 8, May 31, 1879, p. 4; St. Louis Globe-Democrat, quoted in ibid., April 5, 1879, p. 4.

10. Irish World, July 5, 1879, p. 8.

11. Chicago Times, May 19, 1879, p. 5.

12. Boston Globe, July 5, 1879, p. 2; New York Herald, July 5, 1879, pp. 2, 3; Washington Star, July 5, 1879, p. 4; Chicago Times, July 5, 1879, p. 4; Philadelphia Trades, July 12, 1879, p. 1; Irish World, July 19, 1879; Chicago Socialist, July 12, 1879, pp. 1, 5, 8.

13. Investigation by a Select Committee of the House of Representatives Relative to the Causes of the General Depression in Labor and Business; and as to Chinese Immigration, Misc. Doc. #5, 46th Cong., 2nd sess. (Washington, 1879); hereafter Investigation. The committee met in Chicago July 28 to August 1, 1879; in San Francisco, Aug. 15-19; in Des Moines, Sept. 2; in New York, Oct. 28; and in Boston, Nov. 4. For a list of witnesses and their occupations, see pp. 467-68. The majority of the testimony came from Chicago. The quotes are from pp. 75, 80, 142.

14. Ibid., pp. 231-32; Boston Pilot, Aug. 9, 1879, p. 4.

15. Investigation, pp. 468, 277, 278, 318, 365, 314, 317.

16. Ibid., pp. 257, 262, 263, 265, 264. As the New York Herald stated, "At San Francisco the principal topic of inquiry was as to the effect of Chinese immigration." This testimony stood in contrast with that taken in the Midwest. "At Chicago," the Herald noted in its usual fashion, "there were communists, socialists, labor reformers, greenback theorists and unfortunate real estate speculators who had their various opinions on the way to improve society and to bring about the millennium of the working classes, but their views, if they ever make part of the committee's report, will not add much to the stock of the world's wisdom." (New York Herald, Sept. 6, 1879, p. 10.)

17. Investigation, pp. 338-50. The quotes are from p. 348. At one point Gibson noted: "It is commonly brought up as an accusation against the Chinese that they love money." The chairman of the committee viewed this as an insult,

noting that the comment implied that all Americans did not love money!

18. Ibid., pp. 320-24. The quotes are from pp. 321, 322.

19. Ibid., p. 324. When asked what the "cross" would produce, Healy responded (concluding his testimony): "a race of human beings that would be the terror of the world."

At some points Healy practically turned the investigation into a cross between pure logic and Kafkaesque farce (ibid., p. 323):

QUESTION: Do you believe a race of people that does not recognize the law of marriage as binding to be the equal of a race of people which does recognize the law of marriage?

HEALY: I have no evidence that the Chinese do not recognize that law.

QUESTION: Do you know the proportions between males and females constituting the Chinese population in San Francisco?

HEALY: I do not know that fact either.

QUESTION: Do you know that out of a population of 32,000 Chinese there are only 2,000 women?

HEALY: I have no reliable evidence of that fact.

QUESTION: You have no reliable evidence of anything.

HEALY: Yes; I have reliable evidence that this committee is now in session.

QUESTION: You have clear demonstration of that.

HEALY: Yes.

QUESTION: Do you believe in statistical knowledge?

HEALY: Yes; to a great extent.

QUESTION: If the census of the population of San Francisco shows that there are 32,000 Chinese in this city would you believe that?

HEALY: It would depend a good deal upon who took the census. If it was taken by a man who was opposed to Chinese immigration I would not believe him.

Healy continued to speak out forcefully against Chinese exclusion. See Healy, "A Shoemaker's Contribution to the Chinese Discussion," Overland Monthly vii (1886), pp. 414-21; Healy, Some Reasons Why an Exclusion Law Should Not Be Passed (San Francisco, 1902); Healy and Ng Poon Chew, A Statement for Non Exclusion (San Francisco, 1905).

20. Ibid., pp. 361, 263, 251. Rev. Howard Henderson, a former Kentuckian serving as pastor of St. Paul's Methodist Episcopal Church in San Francisco, endorsed these comments a few months later. "Public sentiment here is well-nigh universal against further immigration," he wrote the

Cincinnati Enquirer the following April. "'The Chinese must go,' is not the vulgar patois of the sand-lots; but it is the epigram of the will of California and the epitaph of Asiatic immigration. It is the watchword of the guard at the Golden Gate...." (Rev. Howard Henderson (letter), Cincinnati Enquirer, April 27, 1880, p. 10.)

21. Boston Pilot, Aug. 30, 1879, p. 4. Historian Mary Roberts Coolidge questioned the validity of the outcome of the referendum because of the bias of the wording. The ballot itself was marked "Against Chinese Immigration" in very small letters. Thus to vote in favor of Chinese immigration, a voter had to read the ballot carefully, then physically cross out the word "Against" and write in "For." Coolidge's point is well taken but hardly convincing. Mere laziness on the part of the voters cannot account for the dismal showing of pro-Chinese forces. One could double, quadruple, even multiply by ten the pro-Chinese vote and the outcome would not be significantly different. (Increased one-hundred-fold, the pro-Chinese forces would have still been outpolled by almost 2 to 1!) See Coolidge, Chinese Immigration (New York: Holt, 1909), pp. 123-24.

22. Neil Larry Shumsky, "San Francisco's Crowd: The Workingmen's Party of California, 1877-1879" (unpublished paper in possession of the author), pp. 19-20; M.M. Marberry, The Golden Voice: A Biography of Isaac Kallloch (New York: Farrar, Straus, 1947); p. 229. Despite his contempt for Kallloch and Kearney, the clergyman, Rev. Howard Henderson, agreed with their position on Chinese immigration. (See Rev. Howard Henderson (letter) in Cincinnati Enquirer, April 27, 1880, p. 10.)

23. Irish World, Sept. 13, 1879, p. 1; Boston Pilot, Aug. 30, 1879, p. 4; Marberry, The Golden Voice: A Biography of Isaac Kallloch, pp. 250, 253-55, 259-60.

24. Irish World, Sept. 13, 1879, p. 1; Marberry, The Golden Voice: A Biography of Isaac Kallloch.

25. Shumsky, "San Francisco's Crowd: The Workingmen's Party of California, 1877-79," p. 15; New York Herald, Aug. 30, 1879, p. 5.

26. New York Tribune, Aug. 28, 1879; Washington National View, Aug. 30, 1879, p. 1, Sept. 13, 1879, p. 1; New York Herald, Aug. 30, 1879, p. 5, Sept. 25, 1879, p. 10; Denis Kearney (letter, San Francisco, Sept. 18, 1879) in National View, Sept. 20, 1879, p. 2. Numerous mainstream newspapers applauded Kearney for his peacekeeping efforts. See, for example, San Francisco Alta California, Aug. 24, 1879, p. 1; New York Herald, quoted in ibid., Aug. 25, 1879,

p. 1; Indianapolis Journal, quoted in San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 28, 1879, p. 3. For more Greenback praise of Kearney, see Dyer D. Lum (letter, Boston, Sept. 20, 1879) in National View, Sept. 27, 1879, p. 3; G.C. Beecher (letter, Livonia, N.Y.) in ibid., Oct. 25, 1879, p. 2.

27. T.G. Brunson (letter, Prairie Du Chien, Wisc., Oct. 21, 1879) in Chicago Express, reprinted in Washington National View, Nov. 1, 1879, p. 1; H.M. Moore to Dyer D. Lum (letter, San Francisco, Nov. 21, 1879) reprinted in National View, Dec. 13, 1879, p. 1.

Kearney's collusion in steering the Workingmen's party to the Greenbackers met resistance. The San Francisco Greenback Club declared Kearney "in no sense a representative of the Greenback sentiment of this State.... Neither is he a representative of the Labor element of California.... we ... repudiate the personal rule of Denis Kearney, and most respectfully decline to submit to his interfering in any matter in which he has shown by his acts that he has no sympathy." ("X.Y.Z." (letter, San Francisco, Oct. 10) in National View, Oct. 25, 1879, p. 2.)

A West Coast subscriber to the National View called Kearney "Shermanish, yea, very Belmontish" and condemned his "hypocritical cant." Kearney, he said, "does more to oppose the advancement or development of the Greenback sentiment in California than any other person," and "is the last man on this mundane sphere whose counsel or opinion should be sought." The writer accused Kearney of corruption and warned Eastern Greenbackers to avoid him: "Before you of the East allow yourselves to become entangled with Kearneyism, know that he only awaits 'thirty pieces of silver' to sell the Greenback cause.... How he can be anything but a mill-stone to any great movement I cannot see." (Ibid.)

28. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Aug. 20, 1879, p. 1, Aug. 22, 1879, p. 1; Chicago Times, Aug. 26, 1879, p. 3. The Times stressed "the prompt acceptance by the Chinese operatives ... to join the union. They came in as soon as asked...." (Ibid., Aug. 30, 1879, p. 12.)

29. St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Sept. 1, 1879, p. 4.

30. Ibid., Aug. 23, 1879, p. 4, Aug. 27, 1879, p. 1, Aug. 29, 1879, p. 4, Aug. 30, 1879, p. 4, Sept. 12, 1879, p. 4, Sept. 18, 1879, p. 4, Oct. 29, 1879, p. 1; Philadelphia Trades, Sept. 13, 1879, p. 3. See also Fourth Annual Report of the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the State of Missouri, for the Year Ending December 31, 1882 (Jefferson City, Mo.: State Journal, 1883). On the origins of the union label as a mark to distinguish products made by white and Chinese labor, see Alexander Saxton, The Indispensable Enemy: Labor

and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California (Berkeley: University of California, 1971).

31. Cigar Makers' Official Journal, Sept. 15, 1879, pp. 1-3, Oct. 10, 1879, p. 2; Chicago Times, Sept. 1, 1879, p. 5. Two weeks before the cigar-makers' annual meeting, the Boston correspondent for the Chicago Socialist recalled the testimony of Strasser's colleague, Adolph Douai, before the Hewitt Committee in 1878. Douai's distinction between immigration and importation, the correspondent stated, "gave me great satisfaction." (W.G.H. Smart (letter) in Chicago Socialist, Aug. 16, 1879, pp. 3-4.)

32. Edward S. Creamer, "A Man Should Be Judged As A Man," in Irish World, Nov. 22, 1879, p. 3.

33. George M. Sloan, "The Telephone Talks," in The Telephone of Labor (Chicago, 1880), pp. 70-71. This fascinating collection of sixteen short poems and one giant epic comprises one of the most bizarre documents in American labor history and deserves closer scrutiny.

34. Philadelphia Trades, Oct. 25, 1879, p. 4; Fall River Labor Standard, Dec. 14, 1879, p. 4.

35. New York Herald, Dec. 19, 1879, p. 4; Cincinnati Enquirer, Dec. 20, 1879, p. 4; Chicago Times, Dec. 20, 1879, p. 7.

36. Chicago Times, Jan. 9, 1880, p. 2, Jan. 10, 1880, p. 2, Jan. 13, 1880, p. 4; Chicago Express, Jan. 14, 1880, p. 1. Few newspapers covered this conference.

37. New York Star, Jan. 17, 1880, p. 3; New York Tribune, Jan. 17, 1880, p. 5; New York Sun, Jan. 17, 1880, p. 1; Irish World, Jan. 31, 1880, p. 7.

38. New York Sun, Jan. 17, 1880, p. 1; New York Herald, Jan. 17, 1880, p. 10.

39. On Parnell's visit and the impact of his tour, see Eric Foner, "Class, Ethnicity, and Radicalism in the Gilded Age: The Land League and Irish America," in Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War (New York: Oxford, 1980).

40. Paterson Labor Standard, Jan. 24, 1880, p. 2.

41. Washington Star, Dec. 23, 1879, p. 4, Dec. 30, 1879, p. 4, Jan. 6, 1880, p. 4, Jan. 13, 1880, p. 4, Jan. 20, 1880, p. 4, Jan. 27, 1880, p. 4. One of the more amusing notes in meetings otherwise devoted to such labor

issues as eight hours, prison labor, police brutality, and race relations, was a debate on teaching Santa Claus to children. Opponents considered Santa Claus a lie and deception that misled youngsters. Two weeks later members tabled the resolution because it had made the Workingmen's Assembly "a laughing stock." One worker disagreed, however, and attacked "the whole Christmas lay-out as based upon falsehood and fraud" and "This Santa Claus bubble which had so long demoralized our youth."

42. New York Tribune, Jan. 17, 1880, p. 5; New York Sun, Jan. 17, 1880, p. 1; New York Star, Jan. 17, 1880, p. 3; New York Herald, Jan. 17, 1880, p. 10; Irish World, Jan. 31, 1880, p. 7. On Kearney's reception in Chicago, see Chicago Times, Jan. 26, 1880, p. 7; Chicago Tribune, Jan. 26, 1880, p. 8, Jan. 28, 1880, p. 7. For weeks afterward, Greenbackers and members of the Trades and Labor Council bickered over who should pay for the hall rented for Kearney's speech. See Chicago Times, Feb. 16, 1880, p. 2, Feb. 27, 1880, p. 6; Chicago Tribune, March 1, 1880, p. 8.

43. For a summary of these events, see Saxton, The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California, chapter 7. The quotes from the board of health and Gannon are on pp. 142 and 144. The events can also be followed in the San Francisco press and in Eastern journals such as the Chicago Times and New York Herald.

44. Rev. Howard Henderson (letter) in Cincinnati Enquirer, April 27, 1880, p. 10; St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 9, 1880, p. 1; Boston Pilot, March 20, 1880, p. 1; New York Herald, March 2, 1880, p. 7, March 11, 1880, p. 3. For a summary of these events, see Saxton, The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California, chapter 7; Marberry, The Golden Voice: A Biography of Isaac Kalloch, chapter 11.

45. Chicago Times, March 1, 1880, p. 1, March 5, 1880, pp. 1, 6; New York Sun, March 7, 1880, p. 6; New York Star, March 5, 1880, p. 4; Boston Globe, March 20, 1880, p. 1; New York Herald, March 5, 1880, p. 8, March 6, 1880, p. 3, March 7, 1880, p. 8; New York Times, March 6, 1880, p. 8, March 20, 1880, p. 9; St. Louis Globe-Democrat quoted in Chicago Times, March 5, 1880, p. 6. A low \$35 transcontinental fare, the Globe-Democrat noted, helped induce the exodus.

46. "S.H.P." (letter) in New York Herald, March 14, 1880, p. 6, "John" (letter) in ibid., March 18, 1880, p. 8. A fraction of the writers--servants themselves--defended their fellow workers and attacked instead arrogant, overbearing employers. Letters discussing the "servant problem" and the merits of various ethnicities appeared

regularly in the Herald for the next month. Trying to sum up the debate, an editorial stated tersely: "Our domestics must be selected either from emigrants or negroes...." (New York Herald, April 18, 1880, p. 12.)

47. Sargent interviewed in New York Herald, March 11, 1880, p. 10, March 20, 1880, p. 8. See also New York Times, March 6, 1880, p. 8. I have been unable to determine whether Mrs. Timothy Sargent was any relation to Senator Aaron Sargent.

48. New York Herald, March 9, 1880, p. 5, March 19, 1880, p. 3, March 20, 1880, p. 8; New York Tribune, March 21, 1880, p. 10; New York Times, March 20, 1880, p. 9.

49. McGee's Illustrated Weekly, VII:23 (April 24, 1880), p. 364.

50. Chicago Times, March 16, 1880, p. 5. On the meeting's planning, see ibid., March 12, 1880, p. 6. Bits of background information on some of the speakers can be found in Bruce C. Nelson, Beyond the Martyrs: A Social History of Chicago's Anarchists, 1870-1900 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers, 1988). Rumors had circulated that Terence V. Powderly would speak, but he did not show up. (E.A. Stevens to T.V. Powderly, Chicago, March 15, 1880, Powderly Papers, Catholic University.)

51. Chicago Times, March 16, 1880, p. 5; Chicago Tribune, March 16, 1880, p. 6.

52. Chicago Times, March 16, 1880, p. 5, March 20, 1880, p. 4.

53. Chicago Times, March 20, 1880, p. 4.

54. New York Herald, Feb. 23, 1880, p. 12, Feb. 26, 1880, p. 5, March 1, 1880, p. 9, March 15, 1880, p. 5, March 16, 1880, p. 5, March 19, 1880, p. 10, March 21, 1880, p. 14, March 22, 1880, p. 7, March 23, 1880, p. 7, March 25, 1880, p. 3, March 26, 1880, p. 10; New York Times, March 9, 1880, p. 5, March 22, 1880, p. 1; Boston Globe, Feb. 10, 1880, p. 1, March 4, 1880, p. 1, March 5, 1880, p. 1, March 14, 1880, p. 1, March 23, 1880, p. 7; New York Sun, March 31, 1880, p. 1; Chicago Times, March 31, 1880, p. 3; St. Louis Post-Dispatch, March 20, 1880, p. 8, March 22, 1880, p. 4; Chicago News, March 12, 1880, p. 1, March 19, 1880, p. 1.

55. Chicago News, March 6, 1880; New York Herald, Feb. 26, 1880, p. 5, March 15, 1880, p. 5, March 16, 1880, p. 5, March 20, 1880, p. 4, March 30, 1880, p. 6; New York Times,

March 12, 1880, p. 8, March 16, 1880, p. 8, March 17, 1880, p. 8, March 21, 1880, p. 2; Irish World, March 27, 1880, p. 4; New York Star, March 18, 1880, p. 1; New York Sun, March 17, 1880, p. 3.

56. New York Sun, March 17, 1880, p. 3; New York Times, March 17, 1880, p. 8; New York Star, March 18, 1880, p. 1; New York Tribune, March 19, 1880, p. 1.

57. New York Sun, March 18, 1880, p. 1; New York Times, March 18, 1880, p. 2.

58. McGee's Illustrated Weekly, VII:18 (March 13, 1880), p. 274; New York Herald, Feb. 26, 1880, p. 5; Fall River Labor Standard, Feb. 28, 1880, p. 1.

59. Investigation; Irish World, April 10, 1880, p. 1.

60. The Census Bureau counted 900 Chinese in all of New York State in 1880 but newspapers placed the number far higher. The New York Herald, for example, estimated New York City's Chinese population at 1,800 in March 1879. Six months later the Herald raised its estimate to almost 3,000. The Herald also counted 250 Chinese in Brooklyn and 200 in Jersey City and Hoboken. (In addition, the Herald gave statistics on businesses, noting 300 Chinese laundries, 50 grocery stores, 20 tobacco stores, 10 drug stores, and six Chinese restaurants.) In March 1880 the New York Times estimated the Chinese population of New York and vicinity at 4,500. (See Statistics of the United States at the Tenth Census (June 1, 1880), Embracing Extended Tables of the Population of States, Counties, and Minor Civil Divisions, with Distinctions of Race, Sex, Age, Nativity, and Occupations; Together with Summary Tables, Derived from Other Census Reports, Relating to Newspapers and Periodicals; Public Schools and Illiteracy; The Dependent, Defective, and Delinquent Classes, Etc., Vol. I (Washington, 1883), p. 3; New York Herald, March 18, 1879, p. 8, Sept. 15, 1879, p. 4; New York Times, March 6, 1880, p. 8.)

61. Boston Pilot, May 15, 1880, p. 4.

62. The Nation, March 18, 1880, p. 204; Chicago News, March 16, 1880, p. 1.

63. For denunciation of the sentence, see, for example, Chicago News, March 20, 1880, p. 2; New York Sun, March 27, 1880, p. 3. Boston Globe, April 9, 1880, p. 2, May 4, 1880, p. 2; Brooklyn Eagle, May 15, 1880, p. 4; Irish World, May 22, 1880, p. 5, May 29, 1880, p. 8; Fall River Labor Standard, May 15, 1880, p. 5; Paterson Labor Standard, May

29, 1880, p. 1. Boston actually held two protest meetings, but just one was devoted exclusively to Kearney's arrest.

64. Boston Globe, April 9, 1880, p. 2, May 4, 1880, p. 2. Swinton's remarks were written by letter and read aloud at the Boston meeting. On McDonnell, see Herbert G. Gutman, "A Brief Postscript, Class, Status, and the Gilded Age Radical: A Reconsideration," in Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class and Social History (New York: Vintage, 1977), pp. 260-93.

65. Boston Globe, May 4, 1880, p. 2. Smart reiterated his position at the close of the meeting.

66. Irish World, May 22, 1880, p. 5; Boston Globe, May 4, 1880, p. 2, May 8, 1880 (supplement), p. 2; Brooklyn Eagle, May 15, 1880, p. 4; Fall River Labor Standard, May 15, 1880, p. 5.

67. Gunton quoted in Manchester Daily Union, reprinted in Fall River Labor Standard, March 27, 1880, p. 1.

CHAPTER 10

"NO MATERIAL DIFFERENCE":

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION OF 1880

"Both the old parties have attempted to steal Denis Kearney's thunder, 'the Chinese must go!' What 'blatherskites' these old parties are getting to be, anyway."

--Oshkosh Standard, July 22, 1880

Ever since he narrowly lost the Republican nomination in 1876, James G. Blaine had been carefully plotting his course for the White House. For four years the charismatic senator from Maine had been lining up votes and positioning himself for the 1880 campaign. Spearheading the Fifteen Passenger Act in 1879 formed a key part of his grand strategy and made his stance toward Chinese immigration better known than that of any other Republican. Consequently, Republicans in the West rallied solidly behind him. "'Blaine is the man ... nearest the hearts of the people on the Pacific coast,'" proclaimed Nevada Governor Jonathan Kinkaide. "'His record on the Chinese question has given him a place in the affection of our people, that can not be filled by any other republican in the nation.'" Kinkaide's claim seemed to be borne out as Republicans began gathering for their national convention. "The people of California are for Blaine for several reasons," remarked one

delegate from Sacramento in May 1880. "Among the many is the fact that his views regarding the Chinese question meet with the approbation of the whole people of the Pacific coast." As another Californian declared, the state's delegation "is solid for Blaine." So were the delegations from Nevada, Oregon, Washington, and Wyoming. "They were for Blaine 'first, last, and all the time,'" one Westerner declared, "and would voted and shout for the 'gallant knight' so long as his name was kept before the convention." The prediction proved accurate: California delegates would remain loyal to the "gallant knight" until the very end. Blaine's shrewd embrace of the politics of racism had made him the clear choice of the West.¹

Blaine would likely have carried the nomination on the first ballot were it not for the timely return of Ulysses S. Grant to the political scene in the summer of 1879. For two years the former president had been abroad on a highly-publicized tour of the world. He had met with such heads of state as Disraeli, Bismarck, and Czar Alexander, and with monarchs and emperors of England, Siam, and China. He had also had an audience with Pope Leo XIII. Thanks to John Russell Young, a New York Herald reporter who accompanied him, Grant's travels received wide coverage in the American press, keeping him constantly in the news but far removed from political controversy. Well before the old general set foot again on American soil, Republicans began talking of

nominating him for a third term in the White House. When he sailed in to San Francisco on September 20, 1879, he received a tumultuous welcome; the fanfare followed wherever he went. For the next four months Grant toured the nation in royal fashion, as festive crowds and local dignitaries turned out en masse to greet the "hero of Appomattox." This outpouring of sentiment gave Grant an aura of invincibility, making his candidacy a distinct possibility. Grant himself brushed aside rumors of a third term, but such denials did not prevent him from meeting with politicians in every town through which he passed. By early January 1880 Grant had emerged as the major challenger to Blaine.²

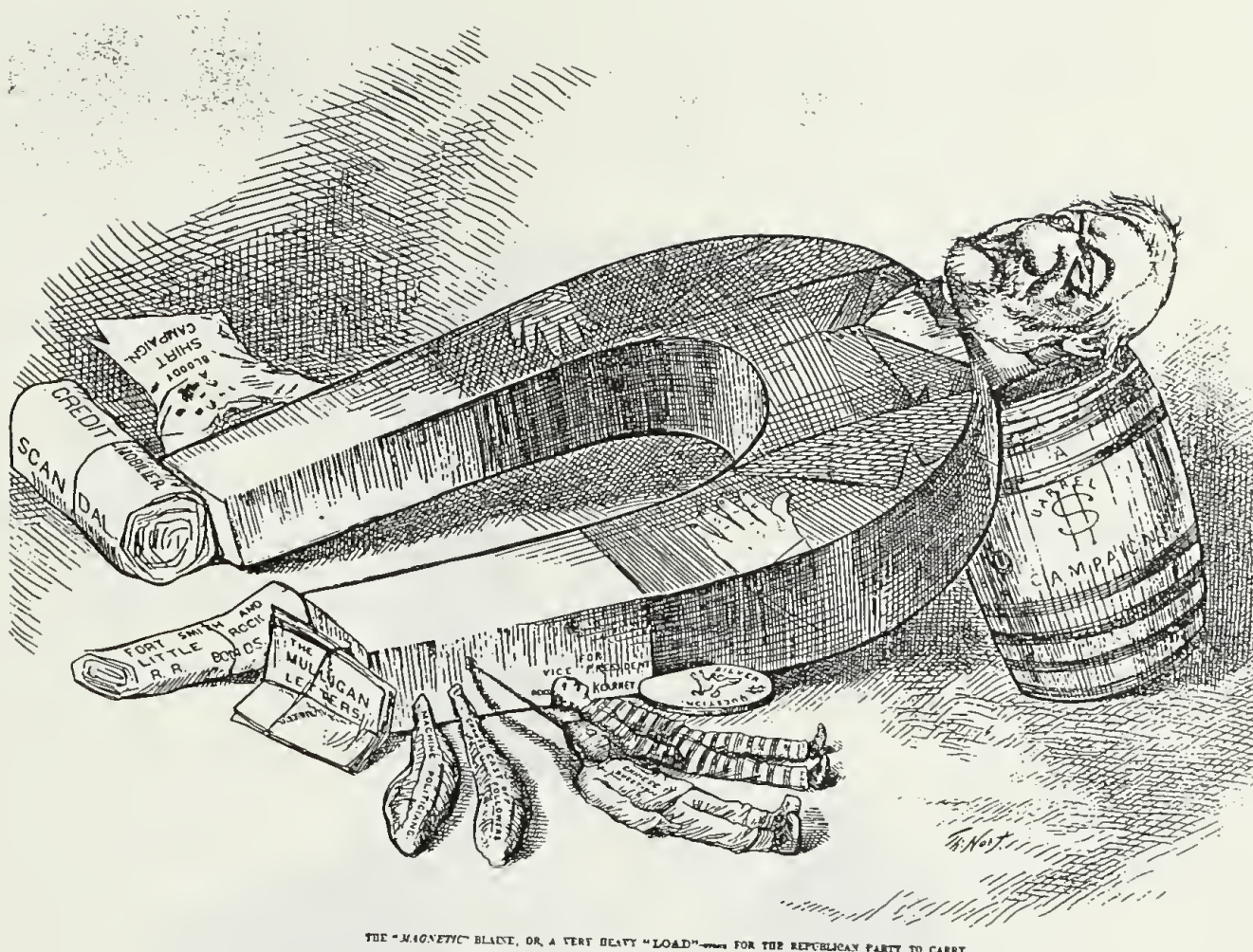
Did Grant also try to press the anti-Chinese button? During his two terms as president Grant had avoided saying much about Chinese immigration. The few times he had addressed the subject, in his state of the union address in 1874 and in meetings with the Roach delegation in 1876, he had clearly indicated his willingness to restrict Chinese immigration. The issue then, however, played a small role in national politics. But Blaine had raised the stakes in the winter of 1879 and Grant made sure to throw in his ante. "The trouble about your countrymen coming to America," Grant told the Chinese viceroy in Tientsin in June 1879, "is that they ... do not come of their own free will.... Their labor is not their own, but the property of capitalists." Here Grant sounded much like labor leaders

Adolph Strasser and Robert Blissert. "If you can stop the slavery feature," he continued, "then emigration from China is like emigration from other countries." But, unlike Strasser and Blissert, Grant did not dwell on this distinction. The problem, he said, was that the "Chinamen [were] coming too rapidly, coming so as to glut the labor market." To solve this, Grant suggested, "emigration might be stopped for a period--for three or five years." It was not importation, Grant targeted, but emigration. After all, he said, "the complaint [against the Chinese] comes from good people [on the Pacific coast], and should be considered." Grant emphasized five years over three, but, loathe to insult his host, insisted that he had not come up with the solution himself; rather, he had relied on others for advice. "I have," he admitted, "no ideas of my own on the subject." Critics might have charged that Grant, never known as a great thinker, had few ideas of his own on any subject. Still the fact remained that as Grant's ship sailed into San Francisco harbor at the end of the summer of 1879, the old general favored a five-year ban on Chinese immigration, and had engaged in preliminary negotiations with China in anticipation of it. Although far less zealous than the "magnetic man from Maine," Grant too could press the anti-Chinese button.³

As the campaign of 1880 unfolded, party leaders would make sure that anti-Chinese politics played a prominent role. Both major parties considered the Western vote up for

grabs and essential for victory. The need to "out-Chinese" the other on the Pacific Coast thus made the politics of racism central to each party's strategy. In the closing days of the campaign, however, with the election hanging on a thread, politicians tried to play the same game in the East by portraying Chinese immigration as one of the foremost issues facing the nation. The strategy that seemed to work so well in the West might also be effective luring votes in the East. The bizarre climax of the 1880 campaign would bring the politics of racism to its greatest heights.⁴

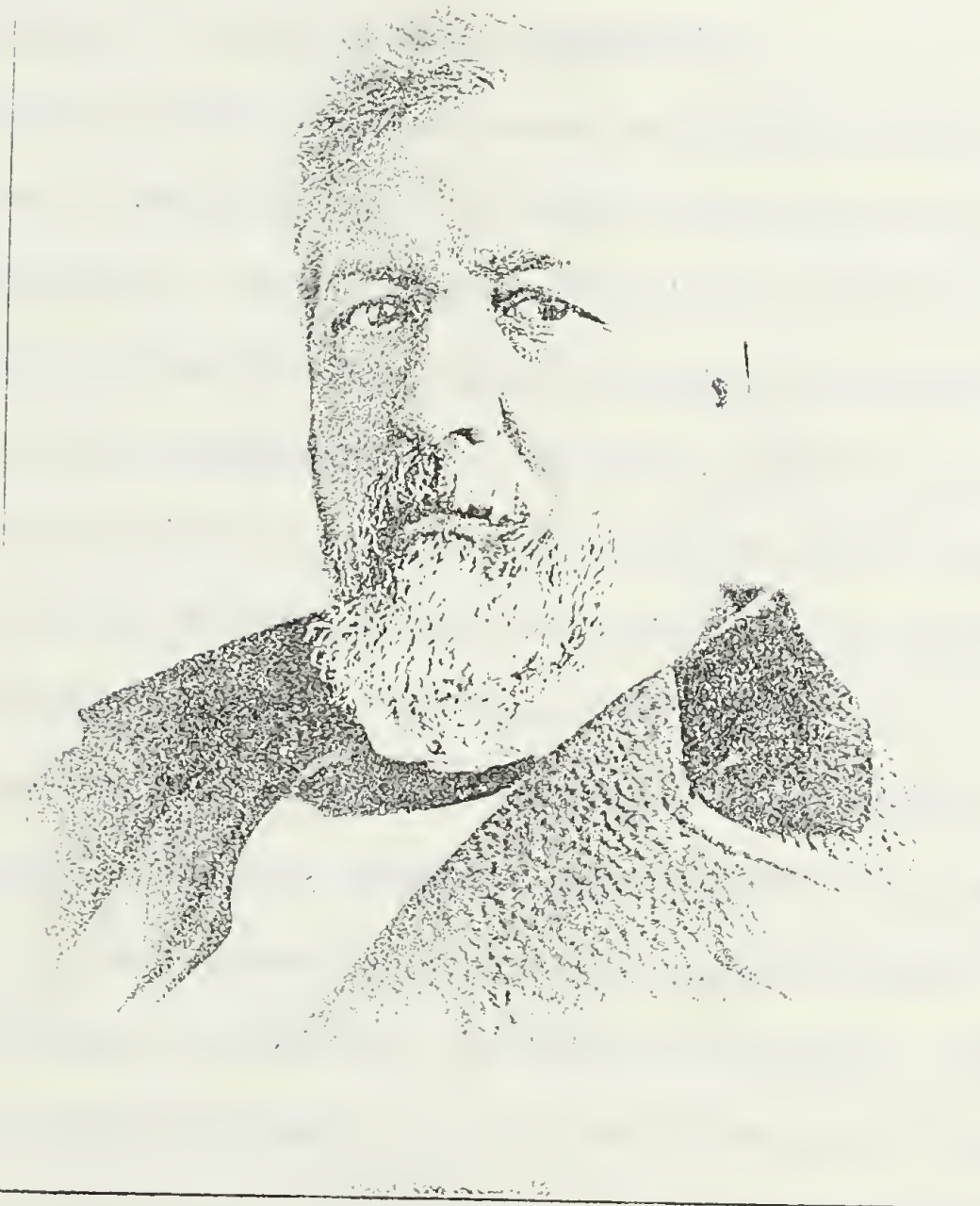
Few, however, could have predicted this bizarre turn of events early in the canvass, least of all James Blaine. As Republicans gathered to open their convention in Chicago on June 2, 1880, his detractors raked up all the old allegations of corruption and deftly branded him with the mark of Kearney. [See figures 10.1 and 10.2] The contest between Blaine and Grant promised to be exciting. With 756 delegates, the Chicago convention was the largest gathering of the party to date. The convention also possessed the broadest geographical base: for the first time every state was represented. Practically every Republican leader of stature attended, and Blaine himself remarked that no convention in recent memory "contained a larger number of eminent public men." Even royalty was present in the person of Prince Leopold of England, who from his seat on the



THE "MAGNETIC" BLAINE, OR, A VERY HEAVY "LOAD" FOR THE REPUBLICAN PARTY TO CARRY

Figure 10.1. The "magnetic" Blaine attracts many unsavory issues--and individuals.

Source: Harper's Weekly, May 8, 1880.



MR. BLAINE AT FIFTY.

Figure 10.2. James G. Blaine (1830-1893), the preeminent Republican of his generation. Speaker of the House, Senator from Maine, and Secretary of State, the White House was the one prize that forever eluded him.

Source: Edward Stanwood, James Gillespie Blaine (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1906).

platform "watched all the proceedings with keen interest." He and 15,000 other spectators witnessed a good show. The convention was filled with drama and suspense as delegates battled it out for an entire week. It was the liveliest and longest slugfest in the party's history.⁵

As the Grant and Blaine camps marshaled their forces, the platform committee met to draft resolutions to present to the delegates. Four years earlier the Republican platform had called for an investigation into Chinese immigration and nothing more. By 1880 Republicans were prepared to go further. Judge D.O. Payne, the lone Californian on the committee, introduced a "strongly worded" anti-Chinese resolution. Eastern Republicans found it too harsh. Then "a war of words" erupted, the Chicago Tribune reported, and committee members spent hours discussing a compromise. When debate carried on past midnight, delegates finally referred the matter to a sub-committee. Emory Storrs of Illinois urged the sub-committee to "'draw it mild,'" but Payne had other ideas. A bold anti-Chinese statement was essential for Republican success: "the Pacific slopers must be placated," Payne insisted, "or the party would go to the bow-wows by lightning express." There was no mention of winning working-class votes nationwide. Politicians like Payne knew that this was an issue that had captured a region, not a class.⁶

Expediency superseded principle, and Payne's view prevailed. On June 5 former Attorney General Edwards Pierrepont read the finished platform to the full convention. "[R]egarding the unrestricted immigration of the Chinese as a matter of grave concernment," he said when he reached the sixth plank, "... the Republican party ... would limit and restrict that immigration by the enactment of such just, humane and reasonable laws and treaties as will produce that result." The resolution and entire platform received thunderous applause. Coming on the convention's fourth day, after a bruising fight over voting rules and before the final struggle over the nomination, the platform produced a rare moment of unity at the otherwise fractious convention. No one objected to plank six. Restriction of Chinese immigration had become one of many rallying points for the nation's ruling party.⁷

Outside the convention Republican response was not so unanimous. The New York Times called the anti-Chinese plank an "ambiguous and half-hearted resolution ... conspicuous for its maladroitness and its obvious spirit of buncombe." The Philadelphia Press muted its criticism, noting that the plank "does not represent the views of the mass of Eastern Republicans." Still, the Press added, few would mind "that this moderate and temperate provision was added." Restriction of Chinese immigration, once associated with sand-lot "hoodlums," had passed into the mainstream. And

the influential New York Tribune, which had opposed the Fifteen Passenger Act, heartily endorsed the platform as "the authoritative expression of the sentiments of the great body of Republican voters.... It has no blunders to apologize for, no heresies to recant, no schisms to dread...." The Tribune then singled out the anti-Chinese plank as an example: it "give[s] fresh emphasis to the views which are well known to prevail among Republicans." These editorial comments suggest the range of attitudes individual Republicans continued to hold on Chinese immigration. In contrast to this diversity of views outside the convention, party policy was clear and direct: the Chinese must go.⁸

Democratic response also showed variations. The highly critical Cincinnati Enquirer called the Chinese plank "meaningless ... simply a tub thrown to the Pacific whale, with 'intent to deceive,' and capture the votes of the coolie-cursed coast." The Chicago Times offered a more sober appraisal. With the Chinese plank "no fault can be found," the editor observed. "The undesirability of the Chinese immigration is now very generally acknowledged, and something should be done to check the inflow." Whatever their attitudes, however, Democrats could lie back and gloat. "AND so the Republican party adopts an Anti-Chinese plank in its platform," noted the Boston Pilot, a leading voice of Irish-Catholic America, "and declares that Congress

should restrict that immigration." The Democratic Pilot, often accused of bigotry and intolerance by the Protestant press, relished the Republicans' dilemma and taunted them for their base electioneering. "There is no trick too dark for politicians to keep office," the Pilot quipped, "nor any policy so virtuous that demagogues may not claim it as their own."⁹

Republican quibbles over the platform quickly receded from the limelight as the balloting for the nomination commenced. As expected, West Coast delegates overwhelmingly backed Blaine. Seconding his nomination, in fact, was none other than Frank M. Pixley, the Republican who had accompanied Philip Roach on his anti-Chinese tour of the East in 1876. "Blaine's view on the Chinese question," Pixley noted on the eve of the convention, "captured the people of the Pacific slope, and therefore they wanted him as the chief executive of the nation." Other sections of the country showed less enthusiasm. The first ballot on June 7 gave Grant a slight edge, 304 to 284, with 168 votes split among four minor candidates. To win, the nominee needed just 379 votes; Grant and Blaine were both within striking distance. The second ballot yielded little change, however, and delegates voted again. And again. Ballot followed ballot throughout the day. By nightfall the convention had voted twenty-eight times with virtually the same results. The only point delegates could agree on was

to adjourn. In hotels and private suites Grant and Blaine factions discussed deals throughout the night, but neither side would budge. Still deadlocked, the convention gathered again the next morning. Grant gained a few more votes on the early ballots but not enough to win. Exhausted delegates began considering alternatives. On the thirty-fourth ballot a breakthrough finally occurred. Sixteen Wisconsin delegates switched their votes from Blaine to a dark horse, James A. Garfield, Civil War general, nine-term Representative, and Senator-elect from Ohio. The response was electric. The next ballot tripled Garfield's total, and the one after gave him 399 votes to Grant's 306 and Blaine's 42.¹⁰

Garfield's nomination stunned the nation and delighted most delegates. To appease the Grant wing and help secure victory in the Empire State, the Republicans chose for vice-president Chester A. Arthur, a New York politician and avid supporter of the old general. "The result of the Convention," the defeated Blaine later wrote, "was generally accepted as a happy issue of the long contest."¹¹

Garfield and Arthur did indeed seem an ideal choice, an appealing compromise ticket which could unite both wings of the Republican party. But several points deserve notice. The only state whose delegation stood unanimously by Blaine to the end was California, reaffirming that the key to the popularity of the Maine senator in the West was his anti-

Chinese stand. Otherwise, Blaine delegates deserted en masse for Garfield on the final ballot. Garfield owed his nomination to Blaine's supporters and thus had a debt to pay the Maine senator. Garfield would later appoint Blaine Secretary of State. But the first thing Garfield did was ask his advice on the Chinese question.

While Garfield and his aides began mapping strategies for the fall campaign, Democrats gathered in Cincinnati on June 22 to choose their standard-bearer. The front runner, former candidate Samuel Tilden, had removed himself from consideration just days before the convention, leaving the field wide open. Delegates braced for a fight but showed little of the rancor or divisiveness that had racked the Republicans. Senators Thomas F. Bayard and Allan Thurman, advocates of the Fifteen Passenger Act, had ardent supporters--but they also had enemies. On the first two ballots, Bayard ran second and Thurman ran fourth. Neither could command a majority of the delegates, however, and on the third ballot the Democrats turned to Winfield Scott Hancock, the most forgotten and forgettable candidate of the Gilded Age (and at three hundred pounds surely the most portly). A Civil War general like Garfield, Hancock had distinguished himself at Gettysburg; as a War Democrat, a rare breed, he had won plaudits for his bravery and gallantry. During Reconstruction he served as military

commander in Louisiana and Texas, gaining a reputation as an able and moderate administrator. As early as 1868 Democrats had considered him presidential material. With a military record appealing to both North and South, the statesman-general cultivated an image of sectional healer and national unifier, capable of burying the "bloody shirt" forever. That he had never held elective office didn't present a problem; in fact, it was a distinct asset. He had no enemies, and his lack of political experience meant he had taken few positions that could offend. He was, partisans claimed, a man above politics. Untainted by corruption, Hancock the war hero was a strong and viable candidate who posed a genuine threat to Garfield.¹²

Leaders in both parties expected a tough and grueling fight. The race remained tight from start to finish and the election proved to be the closest ever in American history. It also proved highly sectional. Garfield swept most of the North and Hancock all of the South. The election of 1880 is remembered chiefly for two reasons: it introduced the issue of the tariff which would dominate campaigns for the rest of the Gilded Age, and it marked the emergence of a pro-Democratic "Solid South" which would shape national political strategy for the next century. Less well-known is the role played by Chinese immigration in the campaign of 1880. Anti-Chinese epithets provided major ammunition for both sides, as politicians made it quite certain that

whichever party won the Chinese would lose. With the outcome a tossup, anti-Chinese politics reached its apogee in the election of 1880, and Garfield, the shrewder of the two candidates (especially when it came to Chinese exclusion), would eke out a slender victory in November.

Republicans had cast the first stone of the campaign with their anti-Chinese plank in Chicago. Democrats responded quickly, but like the Republicans they too expressed a range of attitudes toward the issue. "The Chinese plank ... brought to light the differences of opinion [in the party]," reported the Chicago Times, "and occasioned a good deal of debate." As with the Republican convention, a sectional split emerged, and in the end, West Coast delegates got their way. The Democratic platform called for amendment of the Burlingame Treaty and stated tersely: "No more Chinese immigration, except for travel, education, and foreign commerce, and that even carefully guarded." When presented to the convention the plank received "noisy approval." Both parties had thus made the restriction of Chinese immigration a centerpiece of their platforms, with only the slightest differences. As the New York Herald remarked:

Even on the wretched Chinese question, where both platforms are, in our opinion, bad and un-American, the republicans halt and shuffle, while the democrats are outspoken. Mr. Facing-both-ways, who was evidently the author of the republican platform, tells John Chinaman that he must go--but he tells him with a snivel; he puts his arm lovingly around John before he stabs him;

the democrat bluntly, but definitely, tells him he shall not come here....

Few others wasted words on these distinctions. Individuals as diverse as George W. Julian and George Francis Train considered the anti-Chinese planks practically interchangeable, a view endorsed by most of the press. "The Cincinnati party," one newspaper remarked, "... strike hands with the Chicago party to restrict the immigration of Chinamen." Another stated that there was "no material difference" between the two planks. Puck captured this view best in a front-page cartoon in July. Garfield and Hancock are shown nailing a Chinese immigrant between two identical Chinese planks, both candidates seemingly impervious to the pleading immigrant's cries and outstretched arms. [See figure 10.3] No image more vividly or succinctly depicts the political usage of the Chinese issue in the Gilded Age. As the Greenback Oshkosh Standard scoffed, "Both the old parties have attempted to steal Denis Kearney's thunder, 'the Chinese must go!' What 'blatherskites' these old parties are getting to be, anyway."¹³

The Greenbackers, meanwhile, had also entered the race for the presidency. At official gatherings throughout the spring third-party members met to choose delegates and suggest platform planks for their national convention in June. Only a fraction of these local meetings brought up the issue of Chinese immigration. A few endorsed strong (but imprecise) anti-Chinese resolutions, but not without a

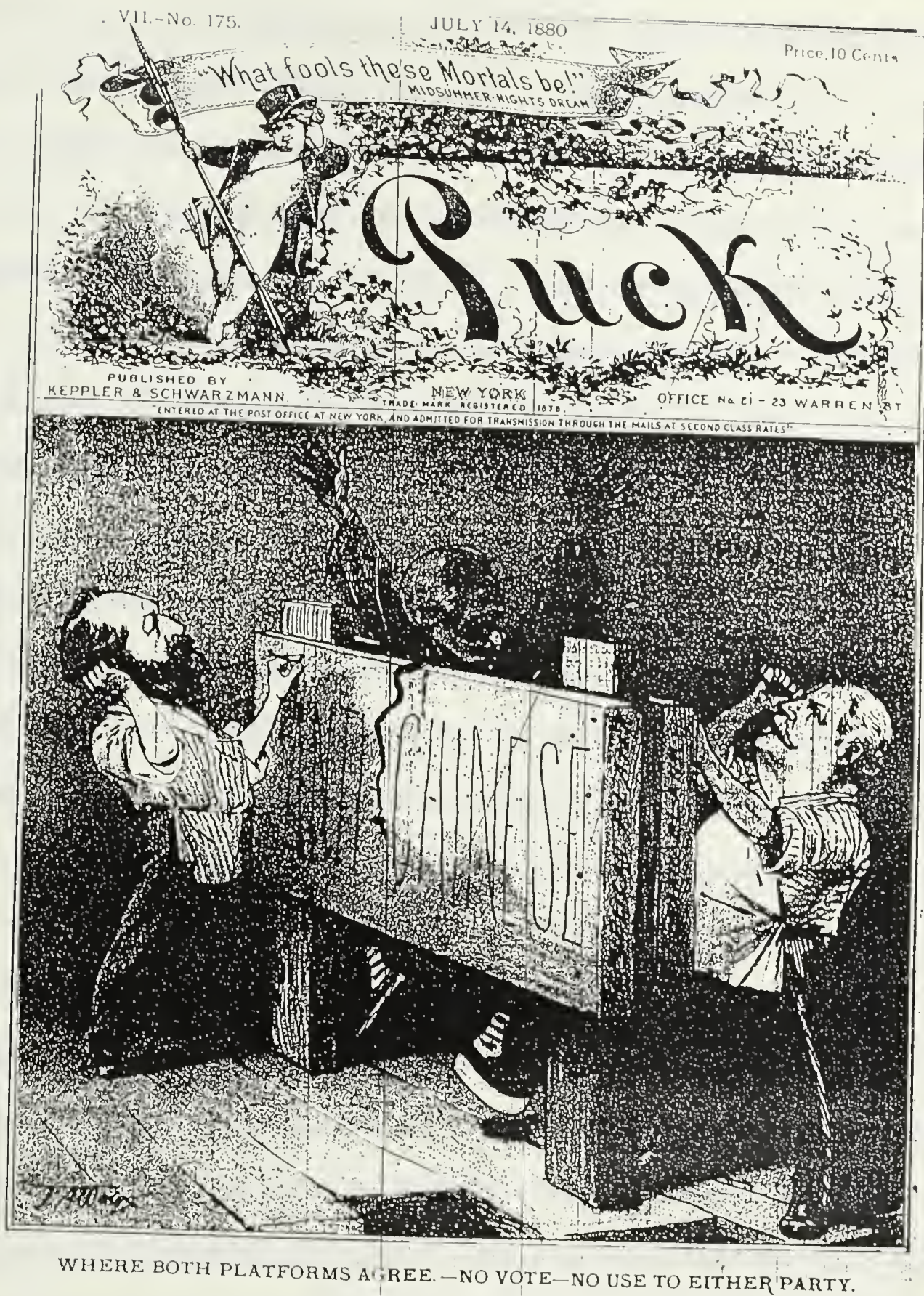


Figure 10.3. With Garfield on the left and Hancock on the right, Chinese immigration is effectively nailed by both the Republican and Democratic parties. No illustration better captures the politics of Chinese exclusion in the Gilded Age.

Source: Puck, July 14, 1880.

fight. Pennsylvania Greenbackers struggled for four hours in "protracted deliberation" over the issue, and New Yorkers engaged in a lively floor fight. "'A Chinaman has just as good a right to come and live in this country, if he chooses to do so, as an Irishman or a German or a Frenchman has,'" said one Greenbacker in Utica. "'Any interference with this right is not only contrary to our constitution, but it is un-American, and against the whole spirit of our institutions. Those who attempt it, or justify it, should reflect that their turn may come next....'" The speech caused a ruckus and the chairman quickly cut off debate. A voice vote on an anti-Chinese resolution was hastily taken "and it was declared carried." Delegates then moved on to other subjects. Greenbackers evidently held a range of views toward Chinese immigration. As a consequence, they tried to sidestep and downplay the issue, fearing its disruptive effects on the young party's tenuous unity. Those who could not avoid the issue played it safe, as did 300 Greenbackers who gathered for a preliminary national convention in St. Louis in March. They simply decried "the importation of servile labor" without mentioning the Chinese by name. But the Greenbackers who met for their national convention in Chicago would not have the luxury of dancing around the issue. Denis Kearney, just released from prison, had promised to attend.¹⁴

Less than twenty-four hours after the Republican convention had adjourned, nearly a thousand Greenbackers crowded into the same hall in Chicago to nominate a candidate for president. Ten thousand supporters jammed the galleries on the afternoon of June 9 to help generate enthusiasm and excitement. Applause erupted frequently, one observer noted, as "cheer after cheer rent the air." After a few opening speeches, Denis Kearney initiated the convention's first of many disruptions. A motion had been made to permit Susan B. Anthony to address the convention. Kearney shot up at once to protest. Finding no supporters, he "fought it alone and single-handed." To the crowd of thousands he shouted, "I insist upon this Convention proceeding to business and referring all this woman suffrage matter to a committee consisting of the daughters of Eve, to report back ... here fifty years from to-day." Delegates disagreed and voted overwhelmingly to let Anthony speak. A furious Kearney stormed out of the convention. "I didn't ... travel over 2,614 miles," he muttered, "to waste away my time in Chicago." Kearney's antics polarized the convention. When a delegate later proposed that Kearney be invited to speak, the motion was met with "Cheers and cries of 'No.'" The motion did prevail, however, "amid some little dissent."¹⁵

Kearney returned to the hall and delivered one of his patented harangues. Denouncing Republican leaders as

"beggars ... robbers ... [and] nincompoops," he attacked Garfield as a "coward" who lacked "the courage to vote for his convictions...." Kearney then focused on the Chinese question and urged exclusion. Having carefully bottled his sinophobia to workers and Greenbackers on his brief tour of the East, Kearney could no longer contain himself. Just as Roach had used the Chinese issue to lure Democrats and Blaine had used it to lure Republicans, now Kearney hoped to use it to lure Greenbackers. His recent arrest and ten-week jail term, coupled with events in California earlier in the year, had reinvigorated his anti-Chinese sensibilities and obliterated his image of peacemaker. As part demagogue, part politico, Kearney had difficulty separating the two, and at the Greenback convention in June he broke out of his self-imposed silence. "There are five hundred millions in China," he said. "Why, my friends, if this Chinese immigration is not prohibited now and forever, they can build a raft and send them over across the Pacific one hundred thousand every year. They can deluge our country with their serfs." He closed his address with his signature, "'The Chinese must go.'" An Indiana delegate then presented an anti-Chinese resolution which was referred to committee, and the convention adjourned for the evening.¹⁶

Kearney set off more fireworks the next day. The controversy again centered on woman suffrage. Anthony and

two colleagues had each spoken persuasively on the subject the day before, and the convention seemed poised to adopt a pro-suffrage resolution when Kearney objected. He denounced the proposal and called it a peripheral issue. A heated exchange erupted between him and feminist Sara Andrews Spencer of Washington, D.C. Kearney stated that his wife had instructed him to oppose any such plank, warning him that if he didn't, "instead of greeting him with a kiss [when he returned home] she would greet him with a flat-iron." Spencer quipped that she was "glad to know who ... wore the breeches in [Denis] Kearney's household." Kearney was not amused. He assailed "the shrieking sisterhood" and took refuge on the reporters' platform. This hardly quelled the discord. The chaos became so great that Richard Trevellick, the convention's chairman, lost his temper and rebuked the delegates. "You are worse than a pack of geese," he exclaimed. "You are all talking at once. Absolutely, you are as bad as the republican convention." At this point Kearney remarked, "If the chair would use less gas himself there would be less gas on the floor." Trevellick, the former president of the National Labor Union who had never cared much for Kearney or his ideas, commented to a friend beside him, "That fellow can't bull dose anybody here, although he may in California."¹⁷

Trevellick may have been right. After restoring order the Greenbackers adopted a resolution endorsing woman

suffrage.¹⁸ (As The Nation commented, Kearney was ultimately "cast into the shade" by the convention.) The Greenbackers also adopted a platform that included resolutions on child labor, contract labor, factory inspection, a national bureau of labor statistics, and enforcement of the national eight-hour law. In addressing these working-class issues the Greenbackers clearly distinguished themselves from the two major parties. They also distinguished themselves by the language they used for Chinese immigration. "Slavery being simply cheap labor, and cheap labor being simply slavery," the Greenback platform read, "the importation of Chinese serfs necessarily tends to brutalize and degrade American labor; therefore, immediate steps should be taken to abrogate the Burlingame treaty." Like the Republicans and Democrats, Greenbackers expressed open hostility toward Chinese laborers, but the language they used was noticeably different. The Greenbackers were the only party to pointedly stress "importation" rather than "immigration." Iowa Representative James B. Weaver, the presidential candidate nominated by the Greenbackers later in the day, emphasized this distinction. "The immigration of persons from foreign countries, seeking homes and desiring to become citizens of the United States, should be encouraged;" he declared in accepting the nomination, "but the importation of Chinese servile laborers should be prohibited by stringent laws."¹⁹

Weaver, like organized labor, carefully distinguished between immigration and importation. So, it appears, did the Irish World, long opposed to Chinese immigration. The Irish World denounced the entire Greenback platform as "tame, spiritless, and disjointed." None of the planks, including the "anti-Chinese fusillade," met with its approval. Apparently the anti-Chinese plank had not gone far enough. The tameness of the plank no doubt contributed to the Greenbackers' dismal showing in the West where voters deserted the party en masse in November. To Californians, the plank was simply too mild. The Greenback platform, of course, was by no means a pro-Chinese document. With reference to "serfs" and "slavery" and a denunciation of the Burlingame Treaty, the platform could easily have been interpreted as a call for immigration restriction, and the fact that Kearney endorsed the platform lent credence to this view. Yet there remained ambiguity, and it is this very ambiguity that is crucial. Indeed, ambiguity is precisely what the Greenbackers wanted. The Greenback platform tried to be all things to all people. It was purposefully vague: voters could construe the Chinese plank however they wanted. To those who discerned a difference between immigration and importation it could mean one thing, to those who found the two synonymous it could mean another. The Greenbackers miscalculated badly, though: 1880 was not the year for ambiguity. The distinction between immigration

and importation, long championed by the working classes, was becoming increasingly anachronistic, a relic of a bygone era.²⁰

Mainstream politicians had little use for this distinction or for ambiguity. Immigration restriction was easier, simpler, and less confusing; and restriction, thanks to Democrats and Republicans, was now on the tip of everyone's tongue. The Republican press moved deliberately to place Garfield and the Republican party squarely in the anti-immigration camp. The Chicago Tribune proudly reprinted an interview Garfield had given a year and a half earlier on the eve of the debate over the Fifteen Passenger Act. "'It is believed ... that the idea of conquest has once again taken possession of the Chinese mind,'" Garfield reportedly said, "'and that the great Buddhistic family of Asiatic races can be leagued for ... a descent upon the Pacific coast of the United States. Such a movement means the possible wiping out of Caucasian civilization.'" Noting their lack of religion, failure to assimilate, and poor standard of living, Garfield added that "'the lowest grade of poor-paid laborer retires before them as it would before a pestilence.'" The future candidate compared the Chinese to "'locusts'" and "'grasshoppers,'" and concluded: "'Once started, where would they stop? Civilization would retire before them as from a plague.'" Despite these reputed sentiments, Garfield had opposed the Fifteen Passenger Act:

Like many Republicans, he cited treaty violations rather than any sympathy for the Chinese. Nonetheless, it was a far cry from Blaine.²¹

As a consequence California Republicans flooded Garfield with letters as soon as he captured the nomination urging firm opposition to Chinese immigration. "It is very important," Oakland District Attorney E.M. Gibson wrote on June 9, "that you define your views on the Chinese question as soon as possible; and in so doing you must be especially carefull [sic], as there is strong and almost universal antipathy to the Chinese on this coast." C. Curtiss, a Republican functionary in San Francisco, agreed. "The simple fact, is," he wrote, "that the Chinese question is the great question on this Coast.... There is no difference of feeling on this subject among the people here, save in degree." California, he continued, was buzzing with excitement. "Your nomination was hardly announced on the bulletin boards, before the inquiry, 'How is he on the Chinese question.' Thus has this point been discussed, during the past 24 hours." Curtiss reminded Garfield "that no candidate can carry the Pacific States except [if] he is somewhat clear and definite on the Chinese question." He closed on an ominous note: "the whole danger in Nov. may exist right here." More prominent Republicans backed him up. The recently retired senator Aaron Sargent urged Garfield to declare himself strongly in favor of restriction

as did Representative Horace Page. The Republican platform, Page wrote, was "not sufficiently positive and explicit" on Chinese immigration. "Knowing that your own sentiments are in sympathy with us in this matter, may we ask you to state your views in your letter of acceptance so clearly as to remove this anxiety."²²

In an era when presidential candidates never addressed the conventions that nominated them, the letter of acceptance assumed tremendous importance. The letter was the candidate's personal statement that spelled out the goals and priorities he would pursue if elected. Comparable to a modern-day acceptance speech (though generally much briefer), the letter became the single most important document of a Gilded Age campaign. As the direct expression of the candidate himself rather than a vague set of principles drawn up by party leaders, the letter easily overshadowed the party's platform. As one newspaper stated, "Letters of acceptance by candidates have become the real platform of parties."²³ The fact that presidential candidates in the nineteenth century seldom campaigned actively for office further focused attention on the letter. Candidates normally took several weeks to compose it, providing time enough to hear from constituents and advisors alike.

West Coast Republicans thus lobbied Garfield heavily in mid-June, urging him to stress immigration restriction in

his letter. Garfield also heard from a handful of Easterners on the subject. Charles B. Lockwood, a Cleveland hardware manufacturer and old friend, found the issue vexing. "I am at sea on this question," he admitted. Perhaps in a hundred years, he guessed, when the U.S. population would exceed five hundred million, "Americans will be in little danger of any influx from 'heathendom.' Yet to satisfy the intense feeling, and tide over the present, compromises will I think be necessary...." He urged Garfield to find a middle ground, provided, of course, that "the principles of the republic be not trailed in dust...."²⁴

Garfield also received advice from two constituents in the labor movement. One of these, Rev. Jesse H. Jones, a prominent Massachusetts minister active in working-class circles, stressed the importance of stronger eight-hour legislation. He sharply urged Garfield to highlight the issue in his letter of acceptance. On Chinese immigration the reverend was silent.²⁵

John Fehrenbatch of Ohio was not. A former president of the Machinists' and Blacksmiths' International Union, Fehrenbatch had been a major organizer of the Industrial Congresses in the early 1870s. He later threw in his lot with the Republican party but maintained close ties to the labor movement, frequently attending meetings of the Trades and Labor Assembly in Cincinnati. "The members of this

organization," Fehrenbatch informed Garfield on June 16, "are without a single exception utterly opposed to the importation of Chinese...." The "matter is very seriously discussed" among the six thousand members, he said. "Your enemies have been and are now doing their level best to misrepresent your position...." Fehrenbatch told Garfield that "I have been fighting all reports of a detrimental nature on the subject, asking them to judge you by your letter of acceptance.... Hence they are on the tiptoe of expectation, anxiously awaiting the advent of that all-important document." Fehrenbatch then made his pitch. Having conversed with numerous workers and labor leaders in Cincinnati, he suggested the best course Garfield could follow to gain the working-class vote: "my advice is this: While I would not oppose the voluntary immigration of any class of people, I would take a decided stand against the importation of the Chinese and in favor of the Burlingame treaty...." [Emphasis in original.] To drive home his point, Fehrenbatch stated that "what is true of Cincinnati, is true of every large city in the north." Thus Fehrenbatch, a former union president, carefully distinguished between immigration and importation, and argued that the rest of the labor movement did also. In all of the hundreds, indeed thousands of letters Garfield received, his was the only one to make this point in detail. Opposition to importation--and not immigration--remained a

major grievance among the working classes. Fehrenbatch, a spokesman for organized labor, took great pains to emphasize that the way to get working-class votes was to focus on importation and not immigration.²⁶

Garfield listened to all this advice very carefully. He even had his private secretary collate the various suggestions from each constituent as the letters poured in. The dominant influence on Garfield's letter of acceptance, however, came from two colleagues whose advice he actively solicited: Senator James Blaine and Secretary of State William M. Evarts. Garfield wrote them both asking for advice on the Chinese question. Blaine's stance on the subject was well-known and his advice came as no surprise. Noting that "the three Pacific states will be largely if not entirely controlled by it [the Chinese issue]," the perennial candidate implored Garfield to favor restriction. Blaine also suggested he "take the ground that a servile class ... must be excluded from free immigration." Blaine's parting advice was merely that it would be preferable that "you should clothe the proposition in your own language than that you should take any phrase of mine." Blaine would not get to the reap the rewards of the anti-Chinese seeds he had so carefully sown.²⁷

Perhaps William Evarts would, for he was simply a party man and not a presidential contender. The advice of the Secretary of State to Garfield was more precise than

Blaine's--and more illuminating. His advice on Chinese immigration, however, can only be understood in light of his background and ambitions. Scion of a distinguished New England family (his grandfather was Roger Sherman), William Maxwell Evarts had been graduated from Yale University and Harvard Law School. Such impeccable credentials and a keen intellect enabled him to rise quickly to the top of his profession. He served as chief counsel for President Johnson during his impeachment trial in 1868, for which efforts Johnson appointed him attorney general. Evarts later defended Henry Ward Beecher at his famous adultery trial, and served as chief counsel for the Republican party during the Hayes-Tilden election dispute. Known for his sharp wit and habit of couching his ideas in "sentences as long as the English language can supply," Evarts in his frock coat and top hat dominated the American legal profession for the last quarter of the nineteenth century. An early convert to the Republican party, he was the chief founding member of the New York City Bar Association and served as president for nine years. It thus came as little surprise when Hayes appointed him Secretary of State in 1877, a position he held throughout Hayes' entire term. Evarts brought with him close ties to the financial community and great visions of a mighty American commercial empire. Strongly influenced by his mentor, William H. Seward (Evarts had chaired the New York delegation for

Seward at the 1860 Republican convention and put his name in nomination), Evarts helped lay the groundwork for the nation's aggressive expansionism and fostered policies that precipitated America's rise as an imperialist power at the end of the century. The "vast resources of our country need an outlet," he declared in 1877. "It is for us to enter the harvest-field and reap it."²⁸

Evarts went to work promptly. As Secretary of State he oversaw massive American investment in both Mexico and South America. A firm believer in the Monroe Doctrine, he threatened military force to insure that the inter-oceanic canal being built by the French in present-day Panama would be controlled by the United States.* Evarts looked west as much as south in his vision of an American commercial empire. There beyond the setting sun lay China with half a billion potential consumers. No greater market existed. Efforts to secure this market dominated Evarts's tenure as Secretary of State. Through agreements and treaties, Evarts tried to extend American merchants' foothold in Asia, lower international duties, and keep European powers at bay. Securing China (and also Japan) within the American sphere of influence, Evarts believed, would be the capstone of his career, and, as one colleague remarked, "be known in history

*Colombia, which ruled Panama, protested strongly to little avail. Natural forces, however, doomed the project, delaying for a generation American seizure of the Panamanian isthmus and construction of the waterway.

as the 'Evarts doctrine.'" Such a doctrine, the colleague added, would be "much more important than the Monroe doctrine."²⁹

This was Evarts's grand plan, and in his efforts to implement it he played a major behind-the-scenes role in the contest over Chinese immigration. As early as 1878 he had given verbal assurances to West Coast Congressmen that he favored immigration restriction and would do all in his power to achieve it. Like many Republicans, however, he feared anything that might conflict with the Burlingame Treaty and jeopardize commercial relations with China. He thus urged Hayes to reject the Fifteen Passenger Act in February 1879, and in fact authored the veto message that Hayes submitted to Congress. Immediately following this action, Evarts authorized George Frederick Seward, U.S. Minister to China and nephew of the former Secretary of State, to open treaty negotiations in Peking. Democrats, however, angered by the President's veto, retaliated by drawing up articles of impeachment against Seward based on rumors he had abused his office through bribery and fraud. The impeachment failed, but the allegations undermined Seward's authority and forced Evarts to dismiss him later in the year. The Seward imbroglio laid the Administration open to charges that it was dawdling on renegotiating the Burlingame Treaty. It also precipitated two important developments: Evarts's well-publicized appointment of a new

treaty commission in 1880 (which will be discussed in the next chapter), and Evarts's unpublicized appointment of a secret agent to gather inside political information on the West Coast.³⁰

Evarts's ties to the Republican party were no less important than his ties to the financial community. These ties overlapped, and indeed, the success of one often depended on the other. During the summer of 1879 Evarts became alarmed that the passage of the new California constitution and growing anti-Chinese activity in the West would threaten both Republican party prospects and trade with China. He therefore hired a secret agent named Beverley Tucker to go west on an undercover mission. Tucker is a rather shadowy figure. Born into a leading Virginia family, he became a Confederate arms dealer who was later implicated (despite his fervent denials) in the plot to assassinate Lincoln. After the war he switched allegiance and formed connections with the ruling Republican hierarchy, counting among his friends Blaine, Garfield, and Evarts. A master of intrigue, the fifty-nine-year-old Washington insider seemed well-suited for a secret spy mission. Evarts hired him in mid-1879 to find out first-hand the intensity of anti-Chinese sentiment in California. More important, he wanted Tucker to determine what other issues Republicans could raise for the coming presidential campaign that would attract Western voters. Fearing the disruptive impact of

both the Greenback and Workingmen's parties, Evarts especially wanted Tucker to test the popularity of commercial expansionism as a political issue. How would the electorate in the West respond, he wondered, to the United States "'pushing our trade into as many new channels as possible.'" Evarts had other aims as well. He wanted to know the Chinese government's attitude toward negotiating a new treaty and therefore instructed Tucker to meet with Chinese officials in San Francisco. He further instructed Tucker to meet with confidantes of Grant (whose arrival from Asia in San Francisco was imminent) to find out what the ex-president had learned in conversations with diplomats in China. Evarts wanted to keep tabs on Grant, whom he disliked, and whom he rightly suspected wanted to run again for president. Such was Tucker's assignment. All told, it was a tall order.³¹

Tucker took to the mission with a gusto. He left at once for the coast and promptly began sending back dispatches marked "personal" to the Secretary of State. The Chinese question was indeed, he wrote in August 1879, "assuming most alarming proportions in California.... A blind fatuity--an unreasoning spirit, amounting almost to madness--seems to have seized upon the mass of people here on this subject--and hence, any movement, from any quarter in alleviation of this curse, as they call it, is regarded most favorably...." The great majority, he added, favored

"stringent measures for restricting the further introduction of Chinese," and "a very large minority" favored outright removal. Tucker then suggested ways to derail the opposition and expand the base of the Republican party. If "all the conservatives of the country arrayed in solid phalanx," he wrote, "radicalism and demagoguism [sic]" could be defeated. "New, live, issues, could contribute more to produce this new and wholesome order of things than anything else." Building an inter-oceanic canal, Tucker suggested, would gain many votes. So would buying the Hawaiian Islands, which could be had for only two million dollars. If the Republicans could turn the purchase of Hawaii into a political issue, Tucker said, "it would be a very popular one, for a presidential canvass." Expanding trade with China and Mexico could also win votes. These two countries "furnished a wide & fruitful field for the exercise of a grand diplomacy," he explained, stroking Evarts's ego, "which in your hands permit me to say, would electrify the country.... Depend upon it, my dear sir, that it is the line of an elevated patriotism, which will touch the popular heart of the whole nation." Profits and politics went hand in hand. Evarts had now heard what he hoped to hear: imperialism could win votes.³²

Later in the month, Tucker met, as instructed, with Chinese diplomats and Grant confidantes in San Francisco. The Chinese government, he learned, was willing to issue an

"imperial edict" that would stop emigration to the United States. Such an edict could be issued "without the necessity of a new treaty," Tucker noted; all that was necessary was a request from the Secretary of State. Then Tucker mysteriously added: "Of course all this you know already, & more that has not reached the public channels, but it is in respect of the political significance of this movement, voluntary or semi-official of Genl Grant, that I desire to post you." The exact meaning of the term "movement" is unclear: it could refer to Grant's negotiations in China, his looming candidacy, or the anti-Chinese crusade in general. But one fact is clear: Tucker's comments plainly indicate that Evarts knew he could quietly and quickly ask China to close off emigration. All the Chinese demanded was a mere request from the Secretary of State. Why then did Evarts not take this simple diplomatic step toward Chinese exclusion? Perhaps he doubted its efficacy. Perhaps he wanted to maintain America's traditional open-door immigration policy. Or perhaps Evarts realized that the quiet approach would not yield the political capital in the West the Republicans desired. Better to keep the issue in the public eye and exploit it during the presidential campaign the following year. Which is precisely what Evarts did. He appointed a treaty commission in March 1880, had them set sail for China in June, and commence negotiating a new treaty in the fall--

all timed in accordance with the presidential campaign. The Republicans could thus actively portray their commitment--in appropriate, legal fashion--to restricting Chinese immigration. They could also campaign on commercial expansionism. Tucker had done his job and done it well. The politics of exclusion could yield valuable electoral rewards.³³

Garfield was a personal friend of Evarts and highly respected his judgment. Before composing his letter of acceptance, Garfield listened carefully to Evarts's advice. Evarts wrote him in early July. The Secretary of State impressed upon him the importance of the Chinese issue, and suggested just how Garfield should frame it:

The movement of the Chinese to our Pacific coast partakes but little of the qualities of such an emigration from their home, or such an accession to our community. Neither in motives, nor in purposes ... does this movement exhibit the familiar and acceptable traits of immigration aiming at transfusion with our society. It partakes too much of the nature of invasion not to be looked upon with solicitude.

Evarts then highlighted the treaty negotiations "in progress." The accord would lead to an

incalculable extension of reciprocal trade, and immense development of markets for the interchange of products and manufactures.... Should, as is not to be anticipated, these negotiations fail, it will pertain to domestic legislation to redress the evils already felt and repel their increase, by such restrictions and regulations and permanent interests of the country, and maintain upon the surest foundations the freedom and dignity of labor ... so inseparable from the safety and thoughts of our society. I shall conceive it my duty to favor any diplomatic effort, and to support all well-considered legislation, which shall have in view these great interests of our people.³⁴

Garfield took Evarts's advice to heart and copied parts of word for word. The candidate issued his letter of acceptance on July 12. The section on Chinese immigration took up nearly one-sixth of the text:

The recent movement of the Chinese to our Pacific coast, partakes but little of the qualities of such an immigration, either in its purposes or its results. It is too much like an importation to be welcomed without restriction; too much like an invasion to be looked upon without solicitude.... Recognizing the gravity of this subject, the present Administration, supported by Congress, has sent to China a Commission of distinguished citizens, for the purpose of securing such a modification of the existing treaty, as will prevent the evils likely to arise from the present situation. It is confidently believed that these diplomatic negotiations will be successful without the loss of commercial intercourse between the two Powers, which promises a great increase of reciprocal trade and the enlargement of our markets. Should these efforts fail, it will be the duty of Congress to mitigate the evils already felt, and prevent their increase by such restrictions as ... will place upon a sure foundation the peace of our communities and the freedom and dignity of labor.³⁵

Evarts's hand was evident. Party leaders instantly recognized both the document's import and origins. "General Garfields [sic] letter makes him a strong candidate," the aged Thurlow Weed confided to the Secretary of State a few days later. "I suspected that he drew his Chinese inspiration from you." Garfield's letter was a hit practically everywhere. Although somewhat convoluted (thanks to copying Evarts's laborious style, it squarely endorsed the restriction of Chinese immigration, and Republicans showered Garfield with praise. "'His views on ... the Chinese question are of a practical and thoughtful

character," the Cleveland Leader stated, "'and they will be endorsed by every intelligent person who has given the subject ... thoughtful study.'" An enthusiastic New York Tribune highlighted the Chinese section, and saluted Garfield for his "manly frankness" and "excellent wisdom." The Cincinnati Commercial agreed. "'The Chinese question is deftly handled,'" the editor remarked, and should gain enough votes on the West Coast to give "'the republicans of the sundown land a living chance.'" Weed also predicted the letter "may save California." Western Republicans endorsed this view. The San Francisco Chronicle lauded the clause, and the Alta California called the entire letter "clear and terse in style, vigorous and comprehensive in thought, bold in expression...." A confident Garfield jotted in his diary later in the month: "Reports from California indicate that my letter of acceptance has been well received there by the better class of citizens." Surely it was not the working class that concerned him.³⁶

This chorus of acclaim had but a few dissenters nationwide. The New York Times, which had criticized the Chinese plank of the Republican platform in June, characterized the letter as "very uneven ... [o]n the whole," but made no mention of the Chinese clause. The editor conceded, however, that Garfield's letter was "in its most essential parts, a fair statement of the principles of his party, and will be so accepted." The New York Herald

simply stated the facts: "he assents to the proscription of the Chinese, in language adapted to propitiate the hoodlums of the Pacific coast." And, the editor could have added, the Secretary of State as well.³⁷

Two weeks later Winfield Scott Hancock issued his letter of acceptance. It made no mention of Chinese labor or immigration. Perhaps he figured that Western voters would be satisfied with the Democratic platform and needed no reassurance. Perhaps he figured Western supporters would be content with the brief reference to the subject in the letter of acceptance by his running mate, William H. English. Or perhaps Hancock simply didn't care about the issue. Whatever the case, the omission left open room for doubt, and received attention in the press. "It will be noticed that he makes no reference to the Chinese question," the Washington Star remarked, "and that the report afloat that he would undertake to out-bid Gen. Garfield for the anti-Chinese vote had no foundation." The Chicago Times had its own opinion: "General Hancock purposes to welcome them [the Chinese] to the United States if they come as free as Irish and German immigrants." Did Hancock thus share the view of organized labor? If so, there is no further evidence. The Democratic candidate made no public comment on the subject throughout the campaign.³⁸

Hancock's silence on the subject became a rallying point for the Republicans in the West. The omission was no

"mere oversight," the San Francisco Chronicle noted, and "must be regarded as significant." Democrats were at "their wit's end," the journal added, trying "to excuse the total ignoring of this important subject by the Presidential standard-bearer." Editorial after editorial harped on the omission with glee, graphically contrasting the two candidates' letters. On one occasion the Chronicle printed their clauses on the Chinese question side by side--the Democratic side obviously being blank. The empty space told plenty. "It will be noticed that HANCOCK's views on the subject are rather obscure," the editor remarked. "But that may be a merit, for when a man says nothing he can't be picked up."³⁹

Republicans had various explanations for Hancock's silence, the foremost one being that the Democrats were the original party of slavery and servile labor, and thus condoned Chinese immigration. More specifically, they charged that Hancock wished not to offend powerful Southern interests who were considering hiring Chinese laborers to replenish the supply of black workers, many of whom were migrating west. Southerners, the San Francisco Chronicle charged, were on the verge of importing thousands of Chinese laborers from Cuba. "Any man who looks to HANCOCK or the Democratic party to put a check on Chinese coolieism in America," the journal concluded, "is a fool."⁴⁰

The Chronicle was hardly alone in its estimation. The Alta California chimed in also, predicting that Hancock's silence would throw the Pacific Coast to Garfield. Many Western Democrats, one reporter noted, who had vowed to support their party's candidate, "are now on the fence." And Republicans tried their best to woo them over. They lavishly publicized, as Evarts had hoped, the Chinese Commission en route to Peking.⁴¹ The arrival of President Hayes in California provided the final touch. In September 1880 Hayes became the first sitting president to visit the West Coast. Although repeatedly denying he had any political motives, he did express confidence that the new treaty with China would lead to restriction. "I hope, and think," he told a reporter, "the Commission will accomplish something satisfactory to all parties in every section of the country." His meaning was obvious. Westerners cheered him lustily and local Republicans praised the party's record.⁴² At a local ward meeting in San Francisco in early October, speakers highlighted the Republican-led Congressional investigation of 1876, the treaty negotiations presently underway, and the party's recent pronouncements on Chinese immigration. They, of course, criticized Hancock's silence, and one speaker even poked holes in the platform of the Democratic party. The Democrats "don't promise any relief....," he said:

They simply say 'No more Chinese immigration,' but there is a big 'except.' Except what? 'Travelers.'

Why, every Chinaman is a traveler here. (Laughter and applause.) They are all transient persons, so far as this country is concerned. So that the declaration practically is no more Chinese immigration except all Chinese who have a mind to come. (Renewed laughter.) 'Except for purposes of education,' it also says. It don't say what kind of education. If they come here to learn to make shoes, or perfect their knowledge of the doctrines of Confucius, that is education, and they are at liberty to come. "Except for foreign commerce." That lets in all the Six Companies, and in law if the companies can come, so can any Chinaman belonging to them, for you cannot exclude the agent and admit the principal.

The Democratic platform, so solid at first glance, might thus be construed as promising little more than a cobweb of protection against Chinese immigration, with gaping loopholes everywhere.⁴³

Chinese immigration continued to be a live issue in the West, permeating the entire campaign. In the East, however, the issue remained dormant. Once the conventions had adjourned and the candidates had spoken, or not spoken, Chinese immigration virtually disappeared from the canvass. Neither Republicans, Democrats, nor Greenbackers stressed the issue's significance or even brought it up. In Garfield's single campaign swing in August he made a series of brief speeches in western New York and Ohio without raising the subject. Nor did the Republicans who campaigned in the East on his behalf, including prominent party leaders William Evarts, John Sherman, Roscoe Conkling, and Ulysses S. Grant. James Blaine made an extended tour across the East and Midwest in the fall and even he neglected to mention the issue. At large Republican rallies with "Strong

Appeals to Workingmen," Chinese immigration was noticeably absent.⁴⁴

Democrats likewise made no effort to gain votes by touting the Chinese issue. At large rallies marked by long speeches and wordy resolutions Democrats scarcely mentioned immigration restriction.⁴⁵ On a rare occasion when it did surface, the speaker downplayed the differences on the issue between the parties.⁴⁶ And Hancock himself, holed up in his headquarters on Governors Island in New York, said nothing. Democrats, like Republicans, ignored the subject; they favored instead more popular campaign themes such as the tariff, the South, the economy, and a train of scandals linked to Garfield.

In contrast to the two major candidates, Greenbacker James B. Weaver campaigned strenuously for president. In fact, the former Civil War general embarked on one of the most ambitious political tours of the nineteenth century.** Logging 20,000 miles from Maine to Alabama to Michigan, Weaver campaigned almost non-stop from July to October. He delivered more than a hundred speeches to an audience estimated at half a million, stopping long enough to shake hands with 30,000 people. Weaver really had little choice: denied much coverage by the mainstream press, he

**Prohibitionist candidate Neal Dow was also a former Civil War general. The 1880 election thus marked the one occasion when four Civil War generals competed for the presidency.

had to approach voters directly to get his message across. And his message departed little from traditional Greenback doctrine. As he told a packed City Hall in Lewiston, Maine, in August, "four great questions of profound importance are before the American people, today, viz., finance, suffrage, corporation, land." Chinese immigration was not among them. Even when speaking directly on the rights of labor or the interests of the industrial classes the issue remained invisible. Weaver had stressed in his letter of acceptance on July 3 the distinction between immigration and importation; he then dropped the issue for the rest of the campaign. Weaver, like most voters east of the Rockies, considered the issue of minor appeal. As the Chicago Times had stated in the spring, "the Chinese [issue] is not the burning question throughout the union that it is in California."⁴⁷

Nor did outside groups attempt to inject the issue of Chinese immigration into the campaign. The few records of unions, socialists, and labor organizations are conspicuously silent on the matter. The International Typographical Union, meeting in Chicago during the Republican and Greenback conventions, never mentioned Chinese immigration.⁴⁸ Nor did local sections of the Socialistic Labor Party. In October the Cincinnati Trades Assembly, bailiwick of John Fehrenbatch, helped guide voters by examining the records of various politicians running for

office. The Assembly compared candidates' views and votes regarding specific national labor legislation and issues. Among the dozen or so items deemed important, Chinese immigration was not among them.⁴⁹ As H.C. Traphagen, a member of the Assembly and organizer for the Knights of Labor, remarked in July: "the restriction against the Chinese is in contradiction to a Republic, inhuman and tyrannical [sic]."⁵⁰

Immigration restriction found few boosters among the working classes. This held true on both personal and organizational levels. The employment of one Chan Pond Tipp, a twenty-four-year-old Chinese stock-boy and clerk (who even had a white assistant) at a Cincinnati factory, caused no problems or untoward incidents among his colleagues, the anti-Chinese Cincinnati Enquirer (which would have eagerly reported them) conceded, and one observer noted he "is well-liked by his employers and fellow-workmen." Collectively workers expressed little interest on the subject of Chinese immigration during the campaign. From groups as diverse as the Workingmen's Political Union in Boston to the working-class Woman's Union in Chicago, the subject received no attention. Even iconoclastic, self-styled labor bodies, such as the United States Labor League and the Independent People's Labor Convention, remained mute on the subject. Just as in 1876, Chinese immigration made a splash at the national nominating conventions, but once the

campaign began in earnest the issue fell by the wayside in the East, a victim of voter and working-class apathy.⁵¹

But the nation was in for a big surprise. On October 12, Ohio and Indiana held their gubernatorial elections. These two bellwether states in the North were almost perfectly balanced between Republicans and Democrats. In 1876 Hayes had carried Ohio by 1.1% and Tilden had carried Indiana by 1.2%. Politicians considered the October contests a testing grounds for the upcoming election and indicative of party strength in the North. Money poured in to both states and Republicans went so far as to hire Pinkerton detectives to spy on Democratic operations. Such efforts paid off: Republicans handily won Ohio, Garfield's home state, and eked out a slender victory in Indiana. These triumphs, Garfield wrote, "ought to be decisive of the contest" in November. Democrats feared the same thing. As the returns sank in, they began searching for an issue to turn the election around, an issue that could be manipulated to their advantage. The issue they seized was Chinese immigration.⁵²

Politicians knew well that both Roach's swing east in 1876 and Kearney's swing east in 1878 had failed to generate sustained interest in the issue of Chinese immigration east of the Rocky Mountains. Politicians also knew, however, that the issue could excite momentary enthusiasm. For

several weeks Roach had received accolades in New York, Connecticut, and Washington for his opposition to Chinese immigration. Kearney, similarly, had inspired massive turnouts during the first few weeks of his tour. Easterners had an extremely short attention span--but an attention span nonetheless. The recent "Chinese scare" in the spring had again focused attention on Chinese immigration. No matter that the great majority of workers had minimized the dangers. No matter that the great majority of workers feared importation rather than immigration. These were the sentiments of organized workers who had long confronted the issue and consistently stated their views. But now all workers, of course, were organized. And not all voters, politicians presumed, had thought deeply about the issue or made up their minds firmly. Chinese immigration, like all issues of race in American history, struck at people's emotions before it struck at people's minds; this was, in fact, a key reason why the issue could generate momentary excitement. It also explains why the issue had little staying power in the East. But if politicians could present the issue quickly, bombard voters with it suddenly, and engulf the nation with it overwhelmingly--before people had a chance to assess the matter rationally--it might just swing a few votes. And a few votes were all politicians needed. Hayes, after all, had captured the presidency by a single electoral vote. Democrats in 1876 had carried just

four Northern states, three by razor-thin margins: Indiana (1.2%), Connecticut (2.4%), New York (2.9%), and New Jersey (5.7%). Republicans had squeaked by in three other key states: Pennsylvania (2.3%), Wisconsin (2.4%), and Illinois (3.5%). Aware that a handful of votes could tip any of these states--and possibly the election--politicians fought desperately to win them. And politicians, of course, also had their eye on the volatile West Coast. The Republican majority in Oregon in the last Congressional race had been barely 1,000 votes. The gubernatorial contest had been decided by a mere 79 votes. In Nevada, the difference between the two parties in 1878 had been 680 for Congress and 527 for governor. And with Greenbacker Kearney threatening to siphon off the anti-Chinese vote in California, every state in the West was up for grabs. The early results in Indiana and Ohio frightened Democrats; with the election hanging on a thread, party leaders unleashed a political blitzkrieg, shrewdly banking that enough voters' momentary passions and inner racial fears could determine the outcome. Republicans responded instantly. In a last-ditch attempt to lure the electorate, politicians of both parties pressed the Chinese race button as it had never been pressed before.⁵³

The scheme was hatched in New York City in the offices of an obscure newspaper named the Truth. On the morning of October 18, Joseph Hart, the Truth's publisher, found an

unsealed envelope on his desk. Inside he found a short letter dated January 23, 1880, purportedly written by James Garfield to an H.L. Morey, member of the "employers union" of Lynn, Massachusetts. The letter, marked "Personal and Confidential," was written on House of Representatives stationery:

Dear Sir--

Yours in relation to the Chinese problem came duly to hand.

I take it that the question of employes [sic] is only a question of private and corporate economy, and individuals or companys [sic] have the right to buy labor where they can get it the cheapest.

We have a treaty with the Chinese government which should be religiously kept until its provisions are abrogated by the action of the general government, and I am not prepared to say that it should be abrogated until our great manufacturing interests are conserved in the matter of labor.

Very truly yours,

J.A. Garfield.

In these three sentences, it appeared, Garfield had praised the Burlingame Treaty and placed the needs of capital before labor; more to the point, he seemed poised to welcome Chinese immigrants in unlimited numbers. If true, this private communication belied Garfield's public letter of acceptance and exposed the Republican party as the willing tool of capital with a secret agenda of unrestricted Chinese immigration.⁵⁴

But was the letter genuine? Hart wasn't sure. He took the letter at once to Abram Hewitt, the former Congressman running for reelection. Hewitt, a friend of Garfield, examined the handwriting and signature and pronounced the

letter authentic. So did Speaker of the House Samuel J. Randall [D-PA] and Democratic National Committee Chairman William Barnum. On October 20, the Truth published the letter on its front-page and thereby introduced the most controversial document of the 1880 campaign. After weeks, even months of disinterest, politicians in the East suddenly turned Chinese immigration into the campaign's dominant issue.⁵⁵

Instantly the "Morey letter," as it was called, became the talk of the town. "This epistle," a Brooklyn lawyer wrote on October 21, "is the leading topic of conversation and of public discussion here." Democrats nicknamed the letter "Garfield's death warrant," and the word spread quickly. "Impromptu meetings" were called in New York, New Jersey, Long Island, and Connecticut to denounce both the letter and Garfield, while "Truth's office was thronged all day" with people eager to see the original. The newspaper, in fact, had to run off extra editions to keep up with demand. "The whole City was virtually flooded with copies," one observer remarked, and "news stands every where ... were loaded down with ... the infamous sheet. Republicans, Democrats, Greenbackers all looked amazed." Democrats frantically kept the momentum going. Barnum, the campaign chairman, urged every Democratic paper in the country to publish the letter and discuss it prominently. He also ordered the Morey letter printed in bulk, "and by noon,

thousands of copies were being scattered through the mails to all points of the compass." In less than a week, the Chicago Times estimated, half a million had been distributed nationwide.⁵⁶

The Democrats pulled out all the stops to get the message across. They affixed posters of the "death warrant" to walls and buildings, and hawked "Morey letter" handbills on street corners. "Men are standing to-day at the doors of the public schools," the Chicago Tribune reported, "and as the children come out distribute copies" to them to take home to their parents. They translated the document for the benefit of foreign-born voters, and stood by factory gates in town after town handing out copies to mill hands as they left work. In Columbus, Ohio, Democrats drew on images made familiar by popular culture. They dubbed Garfield "Ah Jim" and printed the letter on "badges, headed by a cut of a grinning Mongolian, who smiles at the encouragement the Republican party gives him through its leader." One could not have wandered far in the last week of October 1880 without encountering the Morey letter festooned on posters, walls, and in public squares. With just days to go before the election, Democrats had adroitly and insidiously pushed Chinese immigration to the forefront. In large cities like Washington, one newspaper noted, it "completely superseded all the other issues of the canvass," and in smaller cities like Toledo, Ohio, the "letter is still the sole topic of

conversation." Even in tiny towns like Mason City, Illinois, "Mr. Garfield's infamous letter ... is attracting considerable attention...." As the Chicago Times, noted, the Morey letter "has suddenly forced the Chinese problem forward as the foremost argument in the campaign, overtopping, in interest, business, the tariff, and the solid South." As politicians had hoped, the issue of race electrified voters everywhere. "Aside from the Chinese letter incident," the Times, concluded, "there is not much that is exciting the campaign anywhere in the country."⁵⁷

Garfield, meanwhile, secluded comfortably in his home in Mentor, Ohio, tried to remain aloof, above the mushrooming controversy. "I hoped to answer all my accusers by silence," he confidently wrote Marshall Jewell, the Republican National Chairman, and Jewell initially approved. "It is a harmless affair if genuine," the chairman assured Garfield the day after the story broke, "and no denials have been made. I rather imagine that it is a letter you wrote and kept no copy." Garfield disagreed. He wired Jewell that the Morey letter was "a base forgery." Privately Garfield wasn't sure, but he did not expect to lose any sleep over the matter. That night, however, Garfield was awoken at one in the morning by a messenger sent by editor James Gordon Bennett of the New York Herald. Bennett described the "great excitement" in New York stemming from the letter and beseeched Garfield to disown it. Garfield,

beginning to realize the import of the letter, consented and authorized Jewell to denounce the letter as a forgery. But still Garfield, a prolific correspondent, was not positive; he could not remember every constituent nor every letter he had written. He therefore made no public comment and at once sent his private secretary to Washington "to search our files which had been carefully indexed to see if they contained any such letter."⁵⁸

While awaiting word from his secretary, Garfield received an urgent telegram from Jewell begging him to immediately issue a public denial with his signature attached. Other Republican leaders also pushed him to make a speedy and complete denial of the Morey letter: "the Democrats are using it with effect against us," warned Joseph Medill, editor of the influential Chicago Tribune, "and our 'workers' are feeling considerable uneasiness--indeed alarm." Still Garfield hesitated. He deemed such a response beneath him. Furthermore, a trace of doubt still lingered, for he could not absolutely rule out having written the letter. Nonetheless he authorized Jewell to release his earlier denial to the press. The next day, October 24, his secretary wired him that he could find no record of such a letter in Washington. The following day Garfield received a copy of the Truth which included an exact lithographic reproduction of the Morey letter. This removed his last doubt: Garfield felt certain it was

neither in his handwriting nor in that of any of his staff. A relieved Garfield finally issued to the press a full denial of the letter with his signature clearly written. A facsimile copy of this denial appeared in the New York Herald on October 26 and other newspapers across the country. Readers could compare the handwriting and judge for themselves.⁵⁹ [See figure 10.4]

Garfield's delay in publicly denouncing the letter almost proved his undoing. The week-long interval gave Democrats time to mount an offensive and use his silence as evidence of complicity. The Democrats seemed to be gaining. "'We had this election, dead, two weeks ago," said one Republican strategist. "'Now it is in great doubt, and all through the stupidity of our leaders.'" Republicans moved frantically to contain the spreading damage. As quickly as Democrats posted handbills of the letter on blank walls Republicans covered them over with posters charging "forgery." Placard covered placard in towns across the country. Republicans too stood on street corners circulating handbills denying the letter's authenticity, and one wealthy Republican, Brooklyn Congressman Simeon B. Chittenden, offered a \$5,000 reward for the arrest and conviction of the forger. Party leaders tried to disarm the opposition by stressing anti-Chinese statements Garfield had made in the past. Representative Jay Hubbell [R-MI], chairman of the Republican Congressional Committee, cited

House of Representatives
Washington, D. C., *Oct 23, 1880*

Dear Sir,

Yours in relation to the Chinese

problem comes duly to hand. I take it that the question of Chinese immigration is only a question of private and corporate security, and individuals or companies have the right to buy labor when they want it at cheap rates.

We have a treaty with the Chinese Government, which should be religiously kept. Until its provisions are abrogated by the action of the general Government, and I am not prepared to say that it should be abrogated, until our great manufacturing and corporate interests are concerned in the matter of labor.

Respectfully,
James A. Garfield

*Very truly yours,
J. A. Garfield*

FOR JAMES A. GARFIELD

MEMORANDUM. *Oct 23, 1880.*
Hon. Marshall Jewell
Chairman R. H. C. Committee
Prof. H. C. Brown, M. C.

Dear Sir,

In my dispatch of yesterday and this evening (which was also sent you by mail) I have denounced the Morey letter as a base forgery. The stupid and brutal sentiments I never expressed nor entertained. The lithographic copy shows a very clumsy attempt to imitate my penmanship and signature. Any one who is familiar with my handwriting will instantly see that the letter is a forgery.

Very truly yours,
J. A. Garfield

FOR JAMES A. GARFIELD

Figure 10.4. The forged Morey letter (left), purportedly written by James Garfield, and Garfield's belated denial (right) appeared side by side in countless newspapers nationwide in the closing days of the 1880 campaign. The Morey letter quickly became the most scrutinized letter of the nineteenth century. As a consequence, politicians managed to turn Chinese immigration into a major campaign issue two weeks before election day.

Source: James Clark Ridpath, The Life of James A. Garfield, Twentieth President of the United States: Embracing an Account of the Scenes and Incidents of His Boyhood; the Struggles of His Youth; the Might of His Early Manhood; His Valor As a Soldier; His Career As a Statesman; His Election to the Presidency; and the Tragic Story of His Death (Cincinnati: Jones, 1881).

recent conversations and past interviews with the candidate in which he had called the Chinese "'grasshoppers'" and expressed fears of "'being overrun by alien hordes from Asia.'" Such comments insured that the "partisan fury" over the Morey letter would continue right down to election day.⁶⁰

While Republican leaders anxiously awaited Garfield's denial, lesser activists took matters into their own hands. One H.M. Munsell of New York got hold of a letter Garfield had written and compared it to the Morey letter. He then spent a day in the city's financial district going from bank to bank and placing the letters before presidents, directors, cashiers, tellers, and clerks--fifty "experts in writing irrespective of political opinion." All fifty, he claimed, pronounced the Morey letter a fake. Munsell promptly took his "evidence" to Republican party headquarters. There he met Marshall Jewell, who "with his happy and smiling countenance received the good news with great joy." Jewell took the "evidence" and "immediately ordered it sent out to all the City papers--and also ordered it telegraphed by special and Associated press dispatches to all parts of the United States." Munsell diligently related all this information to Garfield, claiming proudly, "Now General, the last 'Rebel lie' has been effectively 'nailed to the mast'...."⁶¹

Munsell's eulogy was a bit premature. Charges and countercharges filled the press as debates over the Morey letter's authenticity raged on for days. The penmanship of Garfield's handwritten denial did indeed differ from that of the Morey letter but not dramatically. Partisans could still take sides. "'There is a great deal of evidence to show that the Morey letter and the letter published in the HERALD were written by the same man,'" one Democrat stated. After all, "'no man can write two letters exactly alike.'" Consequently, each party called in leading "chirographers" to analyze Garfield's handwriting. How Garfield dotted his "i's" and crossed his "t's" became the subject of lengthy editorials, and the use of periods after the initials in his signature took on tremendous importance. "The democrats put a great deal of credit in the 'dot' matter," the Herald remarked. Experts scrutinized the stationery, and high-level postal workers examined the envelope's postmark. Others analyzed the text. That the letter contained two spelling errors--"employes" and "companys"--seemed proof enough to some that the learned Garfield could not have written the letter. "General Garfield is as incapable of such a blunder," the New York Tribune stated, "as of committing a forgery himself."⁶²

Mystery enhanced the controversy. Who was H.L. Morey and where was he? When reporters tried tracking down the elusive recipient they discovered he had conveniently died.

Or had he ever lived? Leading citizens of Lynn, Massachusetts, claimed never to have heard of him. One, however, remembered such a man back in the early 1870s, and a Lawrence businessman insisted he had known him for many years. A local hotel proprietor remembered him also, and produced a register showing an H.L. Morey had stayed there three times in 1878. More "proof" followed. Former residents of Lynn claimed to have known him, and one even recalled Morey showing him several letters from Garfield. Still there was room for doubt. Reporters then turned up a Clara S. Morey who claimed to be Morey's mother. She signed an affidavit saying she had lived in Lynn for the past ten years and that her son, "H.L.," visited her frequently. She had not seen him for several months, however, and didn't know his whereabouts. Republicans considered this nothing more than the ravings of a deranged old lady, and produced another woman, a Clara T. Morey of Lynn, who claimed to have no son named "H.L." Reporters located other Moreys who made conflicting claims regarding their alleged dead relative, which provoked a family feud over his existence. Reporters then turned to the "employers union" to which Morey had allegedly belonged. Most local businessmen claimed it never existed, but one manufacturer disagreed, and admitted belonging to it and attending meetings. However, he could not recall any H.L. Morey. Controversy ultimately reverted to the letter itself. Where had it come from? The Truth

claimed it had been found in Lynn among the deceased Morey's papers and forwarded to the publisher by John Goodall, executor of Morey's estate. The Tribune counterclaimed that no such man existed, stating that the Lynn City directory had listed no John Goodall for the past fifteen years. Every day brought a new charge, a new lead, a new story. With proof like this readers could believe anything they wanted.⁶³

By late October opinion seemed to be shifting to the Republican side. Garfield's written denial on October 25 struck the first blow. Several prominent Democratic newspapers, such as the Chicago Times and the New York Sun, conceded that the Morey letter was "undoubtedly a pure fabrication."⁶⁴ The next blow came on October 27 when detectives arrested one Kenward Philp, an editor of the Truth, and charged him with the forgery. He went on trial at once.⁶⁵ These items, while conclusive to some, appeared to others as last-minute schemes and desperate ploys, flimsy straws for Republicans to grasp in a hurricane of political rumor.⁶⁶ Enough "evidence" existed to prove almost anything. Readers and voters could pick and choose. Evidence, in fact, no longer mattered. Like the entire Chinese issue itself, facts became lost in a web of specious allegations, underlying motives, and hidden agendas. Assertion accounted for truth and truth became irrelevant in the quest for votes.

Politicians manically kept the issue in the forefront as the campaign entered its final week. Democrats charged that Marshall Jewell had offered Hart, the Truth's publisher, a bribe to admit the letter was a forgery. Jewell, of course, denied it. Attention easily shifted from the letter's validity to its contents. "Every democratic stump speaker in the state has been instructed to ring the charges on the sentiments expressed in the letter," one Pennsylvanian noted on October 30. Speakers everywhere followed suit. A huge Democratic rally in New York City on the eve of the election highlighted the issue; Abram Hewitt, one of the Morey letter's original boosters and chairman of the committee that had heard workers carefully distinguish between immigration and importation, harangued the crowd "that Chinese emigration would be fatal to this country." The politics of racism hit full gear. Farther west, the Democratic State Committee kept "flooding Ohio" with copies of the Morey letter as politicians made sure the issue remained at center stage. "Everybody in these parts seems to be talking about it," remarked a reporter in Cincinnati. The letter had its intended effect in California where leaders of the Workingmen's Party broke away from Kearney and the Greenbackers and endorsed Hancock. Garfield came under increasingly stinging attack. Democrats everywhere, the Chicago Times reported, "are missing no opportunity to explain his views as to the Chinese question."⁶⁷

Nor were Republicans. By stressing Garfield's anti-Chinese stance and charging forgery, they too kept the issue alive right down to election day. The New York Tribune, once a staunch defender of Chinese immigration, now portrayed the Democrats as the pro-Chinese immigration party and Republicans as the champions of restriction. "What are Hancock's sentiments on Chinese cheap labor?" an editorial asked on October 30. "There is nothing in his letter on the subject, and he has never said a word about it." Garfield, in contrast, "is clear and explicit on the point," and no matter how stridently Democrats tried to twist his record, "all the lying in the world can't alter that." Republicans attacked the Morey letter as "a malignant lie" and "the vilest, of the Democratic misrepresentations." They hired a "special train" in the East, loaded it with "the antidote"--copies of Garfield's handwritten denial--and dispatched it at once to California. Barreling along "at the rate of thirty miles an hour [the special train] can make the distance between San Francisco and New York two days sooner than the regular train." And with less than a week to go before the election every day counted. At marches and demonstrations in the final weekend of the campaign Republicans prominently featured banners and pictures denouncing the letter and warning the Chinese to get out of the country. The Morey letter also gave Republicans one last opportunity to wave the bloody shirt against the

Democrats. "'They appealed to the sword in 1860,'" the influential Robert Ingersoll told a Wall Street gathering in the campaign's closing days, "'now they appeal to the pen.'"⁶⁸

On Tuesday, November 2, 1880, Americans went to the polls. More than 78% of the eligible electorate voted, one of the highest turnouts ever in a presidential contest.⁶⁹ Garfield won the electoral count handily, 214-155. But the popular vote was much closer. Out of nine million ballots cast for president, Garfield surpassed Hancock by less than 2,000 votes, the slimmest margin in American history. A mere two one-hundredths of a percentage point separated them.⁷⁰ The closest tallies were in the West. In California, out of 160,000 votes cast, the difference between the two candidates was a scant 144 votes. Less than 900 votes separated them in the other two Pacific states. Garfield squeaked by in Oregon but Hancock carried California and Nevada. The Morey letter probably made the difference. The chairman of the California Republican Committee thought so, one reporter noting that he "attributes the disaster [in the state] to the Garfield-Morey letter." Garfield also believed the Morey letter cost him the state and the returns seem to back this up. Republican Congressional candidates outpolled Democrats by over 600 votes in California, but Hancock still managed to

carry the state. In Oregon, Garfield won by a slim 664 votes while the Republican Congressman at large had a 1,400-vote majority. The Morey letter may thus have swayed a few crucial Western votes in Hancock's favor. In Nevada, however, the data are less conclusive. Hancock won by 879 votes but the Democratic Congressman at large won by 1,337. The Morey letter likely played a smaller role in Nevada. Garfield also believed that the incident cost him New Jersey, but here the returns indicate otherwise. Hancock carried New Jersey by 2,010 votes (.2%) while Democratic Congressional candidates outpolled Republicans by a nearly identical margin, 2,055 (.2%). The Morey letter, of course, may have convinced voters to cast their ballots for the Democrats on both the presidential and Congressional levels, a circumstance the data would not reveal. In 1876, however, Tilden had carried the state by over 12,000 votes. Garfield thus ran far better in the Garden State than had Hayes. Republicans carried every other state in the North, including Indiana, Connecticut, and New York that had been in the Democratic column in 1876. More significantly, Garfield captured the three squeaker states by fairly comfortable margins: Pennsylvania (4.2%), Wisconsin (11.1%), and Illinois (6.5%). While it is impossible to claim with certainty, it appears that the Morey letter swayed few votes for Hancock in these states. The data suggest that the Morey letter had a greater impact in the

West than it did in the East. The initial excitement the incident caused among Easterners did not carry into the voting booth. Again, the issue demonstrated little staying power. As the Chicago Times concluded, "the Chinese question ... is not a live issue this side of the Rockies."⁷¹

In trying to assess the impact of the Morey letter on the outcome of the election, however, one mustn't overlook the essential meaning of the episode: that the entire affair was engineered by politicians, manipulated by politicians, and propelled by politicians. And newspapers--many of them paid party sheets--eagerly exploited the affair, indeed became a willing accomplice by keeping the issue on page one. By both controlling the flow of information and disclosing rumor in the guise of fact, the media shaped, perpetuated, and ultimately helped legitimize the importance of the issue. As devised by politicians, the contest came down to which party could present itself as more opposed to Chinese immigration. Chinese immigrants thus became the victims of a nearly perfectly balanced two-party system, and politicians, abetted by the media, used exclusion as a handy lever to try to tip the scales in their favor. Few voices outside the press spurred them on. No one in the East had mentioned the Chinese since the early summer, and for months the issue had lain dormant. Then, in late October, the Democrats, fearing defeat, suddenly

catapulted the issue to the front lines and Republicans raced them head to head with it down to the wire. And the press carried it all.

The working classes, meanwhile, in whose interest this was all presumably being done, remained indifferent. During the campaign, labor leaders had made no effort to introduce or exploit the issue of Chinese immigration. Ira Steward, champion of the eight-hour movement, stated this explicitly in September when he voiced the overarching goals of the labor movement:

There is no money, or tariff or free trade question; there is no land, or temperance, or woman question; there is no negro, American, Chinese or Irish question; there is no South or reconstruction, no Republican or Democratic question; no railroad or monopoly question. The all containing question is Wealth or Poverty for the masses; and all the wealth that can ever come to the wage classes, is through higher wages, until the wage system melts into co-operation.⁷²

Chinese immigration was a side issue at most: Steward kept his eyes on class questions.

So did most workers, despite the efforts of politicians and the press to rally them against the Chinese. "Read it, ye workingmen," counseled the Cincinnati Enquirer. "It [the Morey letter] is un-American to the last degree, and it is an expression of hostility to the interests of every laboring man in the United States who is not a Chinaman." Such efforts may have swayed a few workers. A Philadelphia clothing manufacturer warned Garfield that the Morey letter "is doing great harm among the laboring men," and a New York

campaign worker wrote that a prompt denial was vital for "saving a great many Republican votes among the working classes of this, and adjacent cities." Garfield received similar comments from campaign workers in Paterson, New Jersey, and Mechanicsburg, Ohio. Yet for every letter Garfield received hinting at a working-class exodus he received another that minimized the issue. "The Chinese forgery falls flat here," wrote Ethelbert Belknap of Yonkers, New York, "not one vote changed by it." "Don't let that Chinese letter trouble you," wrote another, "I am a laboring man and will earnestly work & vote for you in preference to all." John A. Jacobus of Paterson, New Jersey, confident of Garfield's "in ocense," assured him that his election was in "the best interests of the Workingmen of this United States." And Charles W. Clisbee of Cassopolis, Michigan, who conceded the Morey letter might hurt Garfield on the Pacific coast, stated: "East of the Rockies no harm will be done by it." Garfield's correspondence thus shows a mix of working-class concern and indifference.⁷³

Ultimately neither Chinese exclusion nor the Morey letter carried much appeal for organized labor. Working-class leaders made scant effort to mobilize around the issue or capitalize on the incident. The radical Irish World considered the matter secondary: workers "must look beyond the Chinese immigration for the cause of ... slavery," the

journal stated in mid-November. The Fall River Labor Standard agreed. In an editorial on the wisdom of excluding French Canadian immigrants (who were presently filling up New England factories) from the United States, the Labor Standard discussed exclusion and immigration and connected the issue to both the Chinese and workers throughout the world:

The political economy that would confine civilization to forty millions of people [roughly the U.S. population] and ignore the rights of over twelve hundred million human beings is too narrow to be considered. Why are the rights of a few millions of Americans more sacred than the rights of all the rest of the human race. The liberties and luxuries of the three hundred millions civilized human beings can only be sustained and developed by extending them to the other eleven hundred million. China is not so much to blame for sending Cheap Labor to America, as America is for not sending civilization to China. The liberty of the freeman is in danger so long as there is a slave in the world. Our own liberty is only secured by the liberty of our neighbor. Therefore to exclude French Canadians from the United States is to keep wages low in Canada and low wages in Canada prevents high wages in America.

The Labor Standard could be simultaneously internationalist and ethnocentric. But whichever, exclusion was not the solution. The Morey letter neither generated debate among the working classes nor addressed their concerns. Despite the herculean efforts of politicians, exclusion still remained absent from the working-class agenda. As one Brooklyn reader of the Irish World stated on November 14, a new platform for a new labor party must "emphatically ... favor ... a free voluntary immigration to the United States of the citizens of the world."⁷⁴

The Morey letter remains one of the small but intriguing mysteries in American history. To this day no one knows who actually wrote it. The accused Kenward Philp was later acquitted and the forger never found.⁷⁵ The significance of the letter, however, lies not in its origins but in its use. No letter in American history has ever received such immediate and intense scrutiny as the three sentences purportedly written by James Garfield. The letter provided good copy, and editors and politicians--not workers--made sure to publicize it. Lost in all the mainstream publicity was the careful distinction workers had long made between immigration and importation. The Morey letter affair demonstrated how easily politicians could overlook this vital distinction. They could generate headlines simply by treating the issue superficially and spouting anti-Chinese generalities.

Garfield, no dummy, called the letter a "wicked device" designed to catch votes. Garfield was indeed right, but whether the Morey letter was any more "wicked" than Tucker's secret mission the year before or Garfield's own letter of acceptance remains open to debate. Ever the politician, Garfield predicted the scandal would boomerang on those who conceived it. "I may be in error," the future president jotted in his diary, "but I confidently believe this forgery will injure the party in whose interest it has been concocted and circulated. Moreover, it is a confession that

the Democrats cannot hope to win on the merits of their doctrines and practices." The Republicans, on the other hand, could point proudly to their "doctrines and practices." The "doctrines" set forth by James Blaine, the "practices" set in motion by William Evarts, and the promises set in print by James Garfield did, indeed, in the eyes of the Republican candidate, merit votes. But was there, in the end, really much difference? Only as to means, not to ends. As the New York Herald observed in assessing the Republican victory a week after the election, "In this canvass General Garfield stooped to bid for the anti-Chinese vote and win the Kearney crowd, which Hancock, to his credit, did not do." Garfield was no doubt miffed at the "unusually desperate" schemes of the Democrats, but ultimately they were nothing more than an extension of Republican tactics, effective if underhanded.⁷⁶

The Morey letter episode represents the culmination of years of anti-Chinese politics. Capping the 1880 campaign, it showed that bigotry remained one of the sharpest arrows in the politician's quiver. Democrats and Republicans could shoot their darts of poison at will, and in the waning days of Reconstruction it was open season on a new race. What had once been the party of emancipation had now become a key agent of a new racism. As far as Chinese immigration was concerned, political labels no longer mattered. Electioneering became a matter of which party could "out-

Chinese" the other, whether by legitimate or illegitimate means. While Garfield squeaked by with a razor-thin victory, the politics of exclusion won a resounding triumph. Rhetoric, racism, and national policy would at last converge as the Chinese temporarily displaced blacks as the most despised race in America. Racism, after a brief hiatus inspired by Civil War idealism, was back in fashion. Only the target had shifted. The election of 1880 reintroduced racism as a popular political weapon that politicians would not let go of for years to come. As the flood of congratulatory telegrams poured in to Mentor in the chilly days of November, the president-elect received word that American diplomats in Peking had signed a new treaty giving the United States the power to restrict Chinese immigration. The path was now clear. No one really doubted how Congress and the new president would proceed.

NOTES

1. Chicago Times, May 30, 1880, p. 3, May 31, 1880, p. 2.
2. See also San Francisco Chronicle, May 17, 1880, p. 2, June 1, 1880, p. 3; Chicago Tribune, May 31, 1880, p. 2.

2. The best account of Grant's final run for the presidency is William B. Hesseltine, Ulysses S. Grant, Politician (New York: Frederick Ungar, 1967; first published 1935), chapter 26. Grant's world tour is covered well in William S. McFeely, Grant, A Biography (New York: Norton, 1982), chapter 25. See also John Russell Young, Around the World with General Grant: A Narrative of the Visit of General U.S. Grant, Ex-President of the United States, to Various Countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa, in 1877, 1878, 1879. To Which Are Added Certain Conversations with General Grant on Questions Connected with American Politics and History, 2 vols. (New York: American News, 1879). On Grant's arrival in San Francisco, see San Francisco Chronicle, Sept. 21, 1879, p. 1. On preparations, see ibid., Sept. 16, 1879, p. 3, Sept. 17, 1879, p. 3, Sept. 18, 1879, p. 3, Sept. 19, 1879, p. 3, Sept. 20, 1879, p. 3.

3. New York Herald, Aug. 16, 1879, p. 4.

4. This chapter is by no means a definitive history of the 1880 election; it deals only with the impact of Chinese immigration on the campaign. For extended treatments of the election, see Herbert J. Clancy, The Presidential Election of 1880 (Chicago: Loyola, 1958); Ari Hoogenboom, The Presidency of Rutherford B. Hayes (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1988); Justus Doenecke, The Presidencies of James A. Garfield and Chester A. Arthur (Lawrence: Regents, 1981); Alan Peskin, Garfield (Kent State, 1978); John M. Taylor, Garfield of Ohio: The Available Man (New York: Norton, 1970); Margaret Leech and Harry J. Brown, The Garfield Orbit (New York: Harper and Row, 1978). In accepting the Republican nomination in 1876, Rutherford B. Hayes announced that if elected he would not run for a second term. He thus was not a candidate in 1880.

5. E.B. Kennedy, S.D. Dillaye, Henry Hill, F.C. Bliss, Our Presidential Candidates and Political Compendium. Also Containing Lives of the Candidates for Vice-President--The Proceedings of the Three National Conventions--The Three Platforms and the Three Letters of Acceptance (Newark, N.J.: F.C. Bliss, 1880), pp. 7-8, 10; James G. Blaine, Twenty Years of Congress: From Lincoln to Garfield. With a Review of the Events Which Led to the Political Revolution of 1860, II (Norwich, Ct.: Henry Bill, 1886; first published 1884), p. 660. For descriptions and anecdotes of the convention,

see Taylor, Garfield of Ohio: The Available Man; Peskin, Garfield; Thomas C. Reeves, Gentlemen Boss: The Life of Chester Alan Arthur (New York: Knopf, 1975).

6. Chicago Times, June 3, 1880, p. 3; Chicago Tribune, June 3, 1880, p. 6; New York Times, June 3, 1880, p. 1. See also Chicago Times, June 2, 1880, p. 3.

7. Eugene Davis, comp., Proceedings of the Republican National Convention, Held at Chicago, Illinois, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Monday and Tuesday, June 2d, 3d, 4th, 5th, 7th and 8th, 1880. Resulting in the Following Nominations: For President, James A. Garfield, of Ohio. For Vice-President, Chester A. Arthur, of New York (Chicago: Jeffery, 1881), pp. 160-69.

8. New York Times, June 6, 1880, p. 4, June 7, 1880, p. 4; Philadelphia Press, June 7, 1880, p. 4; New York Tribune, June 6, 1880, p. 6.

9. Cincinnati Enquirer, June 21, 1880, p. 4, June 29, 1880, p. 4; Chicago Times, June 6, 1880, p. 8; Boston Pilot, June 12, 1880, p. 4.

10. New York Herald, June 5, 1880, p. 8; Chicago Times, May 31, 1880, p. 2. Exact tallies of the 36 ballots can be found in Kennedy, Our Political Candidates and Political Compendium; Davis, Proceedings of the Republican National Convention; and any of the major dailies. See, for example, Chicago Times, June 9, 1880, p. 2.

11. Blaine, Twenty Years of Congress, II, p. 666.

12. Cincinnati Enquirer, June 21, 1880, p. 4. Winfield narrowly led Bayard on the first ballot, 171 to 153.5. Henry B. Payne of Ohio received 81 votes and Thurman 68.5. On Hancock, see Kennedy, Our Presidential Candidates and Political Compendium, pp. 166-218; John M. Taylor, "General Hancock: Soldier of the Gilded Age," Pennsylvania History, April 1965; David M. Jordan, Winfield Scott Hancock: A Soldier's Life (Indiana, 1988).

13. Chicago Times, June 24, 1880, p. 3, June 26, 1880, p. 6; Donald Bruce Johnson, comp., National Party Platforms, Vol. 1, 1840-1956 (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois, 1978), p. 57; Cincinnati Enquirer, June 25, 1880, p. 1; New York Herald, July 6, 1880, p. 4; George W. Julian, "The Issues of 1880--Character of the Candidates," in George W. Julian, George Julian Clarke, eds., Later Speeches on Political Questions with Select Controversial Papers (Indianapolis: Carlon & Hollenbeck, 1889), p. 180; Oshkosh (Wisc.) Standard, July 1, 1880, p. 2, July 22, 1880, p. 2;

San Francisco Alta California, June 15, 1880, p. 2; Puck (VII:175) July 14, 1880, p. 335.

14. New York Herald, March 24, 1880, p. 10; New York Times, March 25, 1880, p. 2; Oshkosh (Wisc.) Standard, March 11, 1880, p. 1. For other state and local Greenback conventions, see ibid., April 29, 1880, p. 1, May 20, 1880, p. 2, June 3, 1880, p. 2; Chicago Times, April 22, 1880, p. 2, April 30, 1880, p. 2, June 2, 1880, p. 5; Boston Globe, May 12, 1880, p. 4. On Kearney's release from prison, see San Francisco Chronicle, May 28, 1880, p. 3, May 29, 1880, p. 2.

15. Kennedy, Our Presidential Candidates and Political Compendium, pp. 74-79; Chicago Times, June 10, 1880, p. pp. 2-3; Chicago Tribune, June 10, 1880, p. 2; Irish World, June 26, 1880, p. 1.

16. Chicago Times, June 10, 1880, p. 3.

17. Kennedy, Our Presidential Candidates and Political Compendium, p. 75; Chicago Times, June 11, 1880, p. 3; New York Times, June 11, 1880, p. 5; New York Commercial Advertiser, quoted in San Francisco Chronicle, June 13, 1880, p. 8. Accounts of the Kearney-Spencer exchange vary slightly. On Andrews, see Elizabeth Cady Stanton, et. al., History of Woman Suffrage (Rochester, 1881).

18. The resolution was, to be sure, very ambiguously worded: "That every citizen of due age, sound mind, and not a felon, be fully enfranchised, and that this resolution be referred to the States, with recommendation for their favorable consideration." (Johnson, National Party Platforms, Vol. 1, 1840-1956, p. 58.)

19. The Nation, June 17, 1880, p. 446; Kennedy, Our Presidential Candidates and Political Compendium, p. 92. On the Greenback platform, see ibid., pp. 80-83. For slight differences, compare with Johnson, National Party Platforms, Vol. 1, 1840-1956, pp. 57-58.

20. Irish World, June 26, 1880, pp. 1, 4. See also July 24, 1880, p. 4, for an editorial minimizing the importance of the Chinese issue.

21. Garfield interviewed in Wheeling (W.V.) Intelligencer, reprinted in San Francisco Post, Dec. 7, 1878, reprinted in Chicago Tribune, June 20, 1880, p. 10. See also Garfield Diary, Nov. 3, 1878, Garfield Papers, Library of Congress. Garfield abstained on the Fifteen Passenger Act but later voted to sustain the President's veto. See Congressional Record, 45th Cong., 3rd sess., pp.

800-01 (Jan. 28, 1879), 2276-77 (March 1, 1879). On Garfield's opposition to Chinese immigration, see above, chapter 8.

22. E.M. Gibson to Garfield (Alameda County, Cal., June 9, 1880); C. Curtiss to Garfield (San Francisco, June 9, 1880); Thomas Nichol to Garfield (July 8, 1880); Horace F. Page to Garfield (June 9, 1880); Garfield Papers, Library of Congress. See also John Harmon to Garfield (San Francisco, June 8, 1880); George C. Gorham to Garfield (Washington, June 17, 1880); Charles A. Buckbee to Garfield (San Francisco, June 1880); in *ibid*.

Curtiss, a newcomer to California, claimed to have little personal feeling on the subject. "I arrive at these views," he said, "from general knowledge and observation of the masses, from high to low."

23. New York World, July 21, 1880, p. 2. See also New York Times, July 13, 1880, p. 4.

24. Charles B. Lockwood to Garfield (Cleveland, June 15, 1880), Garfield Papers.

25. Jesse H. Jones to Garfield (North Abington, Mass., June 23, 1880), Garfield Papers.

26. John Fehrenbatch to Garfield (Cincinnati, June 16, 1880), Garfield Papers. For background on Fehrenbatch, see David Montgomery, Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans, 1862-1872 (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois, 1967), pp. 193, 194, 210, 331. Elisha Mulford, an aging Radical Republican and theorist of Reconstruction, took a similar stand but concentrated on the "moral condition" of Chinese immigrants and their lack of families. (E. Mulford to Garfield (Montrose, Pa., June 12, 1880), Garfield Papers. On Mulford, see Montgomery, pp. 73 and n., 79 and n., 128, 240.)

27. J.G. Blaine to Garfield (July 4, 1880), Garfield Papers.

28. My interpretation of Evarts closely follows Walter LaFeber, The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898 (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell, 1963), pp. 39-46. He calls Evarts "one of the more underrated Secretaries of State." The quote from Evarts is on p. 40. For a general background, see Frederick C. Hicks, "William Maxwell Evarts," Dictionary of American Biography, Allan Johnson and Dumas Malone, eds., (New York, 1959), III, pp. 215-18. Curiously, Hicks 3,000-word article devotes less than a sentence to Evarts's years as Secretary of State. On Evarts's early connections with the Republican party and the

New York City Bar Association, see Brainerd Dyer, Public Career of William M. Evarts (Berkeley, 1933), pp. 28-34, 152-53. For extended treatment of Evarts, see ibid.; and Chester Leonard Barrows, William M. Evarts, Lawyer, Diplomat, Statesman (Chapel Hill, 1941). Like many Gilded Age personages, Evarts deserves a modern biography.

29. LaFeber, The New Empire, pp. 42-46. The colleague was John Russell Young, chronicler of Grant's round-the-world tour and future minister to China. (John Russell Young to Evarts (London, March 4, 1880), Evarts Papers, Library of Congress.)

30. On Evarts's earlier actions relating to Chinese immigration, see above, chapters 6 and 8. On Seward, see Hoogenboom, The Presidency of Rutherford B. Hayes, pp. 181-83. See also Brooklyn Eagle, Jan. 19, 1880, p. 3; Boston Globe, April 14, 1880, p. 2.

31. Beverley Tucker to Evarts (San Francisco, Aug. 11, 1879, Aug. 25, 1879, Aug. 29, 1879), Evarts Papers; Beverley Tucker to Garfield (Berkeley Springs, W.V., June 1, 1881), William H. Hunt to Beverley Tucker (Washington, July 3, 1881), Garfield Papers. Evarts quoted in Beverley Tucker to Evarts (San Francisco, Aug. 25, 1879), Evarts Papers. Evarts' dislike of Grant stemmed in part from Grant's failure to appoint him Chief Justice to the Supreme Court in 1876. See Garfield Diary, March 5, 1876, Garfield Papers. On Tucker, see Dictionary of American Biography, Dumas Malone, ed. (New York: Scribners, 1936), X, pp. 37-38.

32. Beverley Tucker to Evarts (San Francisco, Aug. 11, 1879, Aug. 25, 1879, Aug. 29, 1879), Evarts Papers.

33. Beverley Tucker to Evarts (San Francisco, Aug. 25, 1879, Aug. 29, 1879), Evarts Papers. On the treaty commission, see James Burrill Angell, The Reminiscences of James Burrill Angell (New York: Longmans, Green, 1912), chapter 6.

34. William M. Evarts to Garfield (Windsor, Vt., July 5, 1880), Garfield Papers. An archivist has misdated this section of the letter "September."

35. Garfield's letter in Kennedy, Our Presidential Candidates and Political Compendium, pp. 17-24. The letter can also be found in virtually any newspaper dated July 13, 1880.

36. Thurlow Weed to Evarts (New York, July 17, 1880), Evarts Papers; Cleveland Leader quoted in Chicago Times, July 14, 1880, p. 2; Cincinnati Commercial quoted in ibid.,

July 13, 1880, p. 1; New York Tribune, July 13, 1880, p. 4; San Francisco Chronicle, July 13, 1880, p. 4; San Francisco Alta California, July 14, 1880, p. 2; Garfield Diary, July 26, 1880, Garfield Papers. See also Cincinnati Gazette, July 13, 1880, p. 4.

37. New York Times, July 13, 1880, p. 4; New York Herald, July 13, 1880, p. 4.

38. Hancock's letter in Kennedy, Our Presidential Candidates and Political Compendium, pp. 162-65; Washington Star, July 31, 1880, p. 2; Chicago Times, July 30, 1880, p. 4.

39. San Francisco Chronicle, Aug. 1, 1880, p. 4, Aug. 10, 1880, p. 2, Oct. 20, 1880, p. 2.

40. Ibid., Aug. 4, 1880, p. 2, Sept. 23, 1880, p. 2, Oct. 7, 1880, p. 2, Oct. 26, 1880, p. 3, Oct. 27, 1880, p. 2, Oct. 31, 1880, p. 4. See also Cincinnati Enquirer, Oct. 25, 1880, p. 4.

41. San Francisco Alta California, Aug. 3, 1880, p. 2; "Gus Pry," in New York Truth, Aug. 16, 1880, p. 3. On the treaty commission, see, for example, San Francisco Chronicle, June 15, 1880, p. 3, June 16, 1880, p. 2, June 17, 1880, p. 2, Aug. 4, 1880, p. 2; San Francisco Alta California, June 14, 1880, p. 1, June 16, 1880, p. 1.

42. San Francisco Alta California, Sept. 9, 1880, p. 1. The San Francisco Chronicle believed Hayes's tour would help the anti-Chinese cause. "It is only through the visits of prominent men," the journal stated, "that we may hope for any alteration of the opinion existing at the East on this subject--an opinion shared by all parties and all classes alike." (San Francisco Chronicle, Sept. 8, 1880, p. 4.)

43. San Francisco Chronicle, Oct. 5, 1880, p. 3. See also New York Herald, Aug. 13, 1880, p. 10.

44. New York Herald, Aug. 8, 1880, p. 5, Aug. 9, 1880, pp. 3, 4, Aug. 10, 1880, p. 3, Aug. 26, 1880, p. 3, Aug. 31, 1880, p. 3, Sept. 10, 1880, p. 5, Sept. 18, 1880, p. 3, Oct. 10, 1880, p. 8; Chicago Times, Sept. 26, 1880, p. 3, Sept. 29, 1880, p. 2, Sept. 30, 1880, p. 1, Oct. 10, 1880, p. 2. See also Indianapolis Journal, Sept. 9, 1880, and Cleveland Leader, Sept. 29, 1880, clippings in Container 46, John A. Logan Papers, Library of Congress. Republican strategists had earlier considered sending Blaine to the Pacific Coast to campaign, but later felt his services would be more valuable in the East. See Chicago Times, July 3, 1880, p. 6; Washington Star, Sept. 3, 1880, p. 1; W.E. Chandler to

Mrs. James G. Blaine (Warner, N.H., Sept. 6, 1880, Sept. 12, 1880), Blaine Papers, Library of Congress. During his campaign tour, Blaine stayed at Garfield's home in Mentor, Ohio. See Garfield Diary, Sept. 7, 1880, Oct. 4, 1880, Oct. 5, 1880, Garfield Papers.

45. See, for example, New York Herald, Sept. 24, 1880, pp. 3-4, Oct. 6, 1880, p. 5. The only exception I have found is a Colonel Isaac P. Gray, running for Lieutenant-Governor of Indiana, who mentioned Hayes's veto of the Fifteen Passenger Act. (Cincinnati Enquirer, Aug. 7, 1880, p. 2.)

46. Chicago Times, Sept. 19, 1880, p. 2, Sept. 20, 1880, p. 2. The speaker, William F. Vilas of Madison, Wisconsin, simply said, "the Chinese question was unimportant," and that "both parties" used it to "bait their hook on the Pacific coast...." Vilas later served as Postmaster General and Secretary of the Interior under Grover Cleveland.

47. New York Herald, Sept. 12, 1880, p. 7; Fred E. Haynes, Third Party Movements Since the Civil War with Special Reference to Iowa. A Study in Social Politics (Iowa City: State Historical Society, 1916), p. 140; Fred E. Haynes, James Baird Weaver (Iowa City: State Historical Society, 1919), p. 167. On Weaver's speeches, see, for example, Boston Globe, Aug. 28, 1880, p. 1; Oshkosh Wisconsin Standard, Sept. 2, 1880, p. 4, Sept. 9, 1880, pp. 6-7; New York Herald, Aug. 28, 1880, p. 2, Sept. 11, 1880, p. 5, Sept. 12, 1880, p. 7, Sept. 14, 1880, p. 4, Sept. 20, 1880, p. 3; Chicago Express, Oct. 12, 1880, pp. 4-5. For Weaver's letter of acceptance, see Kennedy, Our Presidential Candidates and Political Compendium. The quotes are from the Boston Globe, Aug. 31, 1880, p. 1; Chicago Times, April 12, 1880, p. 4.

48. Chicago Tribune, June 8, 1880, p. 8; Chicago News, June 11, 1880, p. 1; Chicago Times, June 12, 1880, p. 12. A resolution critical of Garfield because he had attempted to reduce the wages of printers at the Government Printing Office was introduced but tabled.

49. Chicago Times, July 12, 1880, p. 1, Aug. 10, 1880, p. 8, New York Herald, Aug. 23, 1880, p. 9, Oct. 4, 1880, p. 5; Cincinnati Enquirer, Oct. 4, 1880, p. 9.

50. H.C. Traphagen to John Samuel (Cincinnati, July 4, 1880), Samuel Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin. I am indebted to James Danky and Harold L. Miller for bringing this letter to my attention. Traphagen was a political enemy of Fehrenbatch. It is noteworthy that in

spite of this antagonism they both agreed on the injustice of Chinese exclusion. (H.C. Traphagen to Terence V. Powderly, Sept. 19, 1880, Powderly Papers, Catholic University.)

51. Cincinnati Enquirer, Oct. 28, 1880, p. 4; "M.T. & Co.," (letter, Cincinnati, Oct. 27) in ibid.; Boston Globe, June 18, 1880, p. 2, July 20, 1880, p. 1; Chicago Times, Aug. 25, 1880, p. 5; New York Herald, July 30, 1880, p. 3. Leaders of the United States Labor League, the Globe reported, wanted to meet with Hancock. "They stated they had come as representatives of thousands of workingmen ... [to discuss] matters which the organization they belong to consider of vital importance to the laboring men of the country.... They demand protection to American workmen, an enforcement of the eight-hour law, the establishment of a system of arbitration between employers and workmen to obviate strikes, and the enactment of other laws tending to more justly award a division of profits between capital and labor."

52. Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections, 2nd ed. (Washington, 1985), p. 339; Taylor, Garfield of Ohio: The Available Man, pp. 214-16; Garfield to Edwards Pierrepont (Oct. 16, 1880) quoted in ibid., p. 216.

53. Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections, pp. 339, 340, 513, 522, 794-800.

54. The Morey letter can be found in practically any newspaper dated Oct. 20 or 21, 1880. See, for example, Chicago Times, Oct. 21, 1880, p. 3.

55. For lively accounts of the Morey letter affair, see Clancy, The Presidential Election of 1880, pp. 233-37; and Peskin, Garfield, pp. 505-08. For a fuller, if highly partisan account, see John I. Davenport, History of the Morey Letter (New York, 1884).

56. Henderson Benedict to Garfield (Brooklyn, Oct. 21, 1880), H.M. Munsell to Garfield (New York, Oct. 22, 1880), Garfield Papers; Cincinnati Enquirer, Oct. 22, 1880, p. 4; Chicago Times, Oct. 21, 1880, p. 3, Oct. 26, 1880, p. 1.

57. Chicago Tribune quoted in San Francisco Chronicle, Oct. 29, 1880, p. 3; Cincinnati Tribune quoted in San Francisco Chronicle, Oct. 27, 1880, p. 5; D.E. Hening to Garfield (Philadelphia, Oct. 21, 1880), C.S. Hall to Garfield (Skeneateles, N.Y., Oct. 25, 1880), Garfield Papers; Cincinnati Enquirer, Oct. 25, 1880, p. 1, Oct. 26, 1880, p. 4, Oct. 30, 1880, p. 2; Chicago Times, Oct. 26, 1880, p. 1, Oct. 28, 1880, p. 1, Oct. 30, 1880, p. 11.

58. Garfield Diary, Oct. 21, 1880, Oct. 22, 1880, Oct. 23, 1880, Oct. 24, 1880, Oct. 25, 1880, Marshall Jewell to Garfield (New York, Oct. 21, 1880), John K. Valentine to S.W. Dorsey (Oct. 21, 1880), included in John K. Valentine to Garfield (Oct. 21, 1880), Garfield Papers.

59. Garfield Diary, Oct. 23, 1880, Oct. 24, 1880, Oct. 25, 1880, J. Medill to Garfield (Chicago, Oct. 21, 1880), Garfield Papers; New York Herald, Oct. 26, 1880, p. 3.

60. Rochester Union and Advertiser, Nov. 1, 1880 (extra). I am indebted to Daniel Clifton for bringing this document to my attention. "Dick***" (letter) in Fall River Labor Standard, Oct. 30, 1880, p. 4; Garfield Diary, Oct. 26, 1880, Garfield Papers; Cincinnati Gazette, Oct. 27, 1880, p. 1; Republican chairman quoted in Chicago Tribune, reprinted in San Francisco Chronicle, Oct. 24, 1880, p. 8. See also Cincinnati Gazette, Oct. 23, 1880, p. 1; Cincinnati Weekly Times, Oct. 28, 1880, p. 4.

61. H.M. Munsell to Garfield (New York City, Oct. 22, 1880), Garfield Papers, Library of Congress.

62. New York Herald, Oct. 27, 1880, p. 3; New York World, Oct. 27, 1880, p. 1; New York Tribune, Oct. 25, 1880, p. 4. See also Chicago Tribune, Oct. 28, 1880, p. 2; Cincinnati Enquirer, Oct. 22, 1880, p. 4, Oct. 29, 1880, p. 5.

63. For all the various charges, see Chicago Times, Oct. 23, 1880, p. 6, Oct. 28, 1880, p. 4; New York Herald, Oct. 22, 1880, p. 4; Cincinnati Enquirer, Oct. 25, 1880, p. 1, Oct. 27, 1880, p. 4; New York World, Oct. 26, 1880, p. 1, Oct. 27, 1880, p. 1, Oct. 29, 1880, p. 8, Oct. 31, 1880, p. 1, Nov. 1, 1880, p. 1, Nov. 2, 1880, p. 1; New York Tribune, Oct. 31, 1880, p. 5, Nov. 2, 1880, p. 8; Brooklyn Eagle, Oct. 29, 1880, p. 2, Nov. 1, 1880, p. 2; Rochester Union and Advertiser, Nov. 1, 1880 (extra). One rumor surfaced that Ben Butler had masterminded the forgery. See Cincinnati Enquirer, Oct. 25, 1880, p. 4.

64. New York Sun, Oct. 24, 1880, p. 2; Chicago Times, Oct. 30, 1880, p. 6. Other Democratic newspapers denouncing the forgery included the Washington Capital and the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, which flip-flopped on the issue. See Capital cited in San Francisco Alta California, Oct. 26, 1880, p. 1; St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Oct. 23, 1880, p. 4, Oct. 25, 1880, p. 4, Oct. 26, 1880, p. 4.

65. New York Tribune, Oct. 28, 1880, p. 1.

66. Barnum called Philp's arrest "'a device to break the effect of the publication of Garfield's letter in favor of Chinese immigration.'" (Cincinnati Gazette, Oct. 29, 1880, p. 1.)

67. Rochester Union and Advertiser, Nov. 1, 1880 (extra); Chicago Times, Oct. 26, 1880, p. 2, Oct. 30, 1880, pp. 5, 11; New York Truth, Oct. 29, 1880, p. 1; Columbus (Ohio) Herald quoted in San Francisco Chronicle, Oct. 27, 1880, p. 5; Cincinnati Enquirer, Oct. 29, 1880, p. 1.

68. New York Tribune, Oct. 30, 1880, p. 4; D.E. Hening to Garfield (Philadelphia, Oct. 21, 1880), Richard C. McCormick (New York City, Oct. 26, 1880), Garfield Papers; Cincinnati Gazette, Oct. 28, 1880, p. 1; New York Herald, Oct. 30, 1880, p. 4; Ingersoll quoted by Chicago Inter-Ocean in San Francisco Chronicle, Oct. 29, 1880, p. 3. See also New York Tribune, Oct. 22, 1880, p. 4.

69. Herbert J. Clancy claims it was the highest proportion ever in a presidential election. See Clancy, The Presidential Election of 1880, p. 242.

70. The final tally was Garfield 4,446,158 (48.27%); Hancock 4,444,260 (48.25%); Weaver 305,997 (3.33%); and assorted others, 14,0005 (.15%). Other sources give slightly different vote counts. Richard B. Morris gives Garfield a plurality of 7,000 votes; the Census Bureau gives him a plurality of 39,000. I have relied on the Congressional Quarterly's data because it is both the most definitive and most detailed. (Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections, p. 340; Richard B. Morris and Jeffrey B. Morris, eds., Encyclopedia of American History (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), p. 305; Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970, II (Washington, 1975), p. 1073.)

71. Congressional Quarterly's Guide to U.S. Elections, pp. 340, 799-801; New York Herald, Nov. 4, 1880, p. 5; Garfield Diary, Nov. 3, 1880, Garfield Papers; Chicago Times, Oct. 27, 1880, p. 6.

72. Ira Steward (letter) in Fall River Labor Standard, Sept. 11, 1880, p. 3.

73. Cincinnati Enquirer, Oct. 22, 1880, p. 4; J.F. Conrad to Garfield (Philadelphia, Oct. 23, 1880), M. Christy Groez to Garfield (New York City, Oct. 22, 1880), Will Hague to Garfield (Paterson, N.J., Oct. 22, 1880), L.V.B. Taylor to Garfield (Mechanicsburg, Ohio, Oct. 21, 1880), Ethelbert Belknap to Garfield (Yonkers, N.Y., Oct. 27, 1880), A.O. Boyle to Garfield (New Orleans, Oct. 31, 1880), John A.

Jacobus to Garfield (Paterson, N.J., Oct. 26, 1880), Charles W. Clisbee to Garfield (Cassopolis, Mich., Oct. 27, 1880), Garfield Papers.

74. Irish World, Nov. 13, 1880, p. 4. See also ibid., Nov. 6, 1880, p. 4. Fall River Labor Standard, Nov. 20, 1880, p. 4; William Hanson (letter, Brooklyn, Nov. 14, 1880) in Irish World, Nov. 20, 1880.

75. Clancy, The Presidential Election of 1880, p. 237 n102.

76. Garfield Diary, Oct. 21, 1880, Oct. 29, 1880, Garfield Papers; New York Herald, Nov. 8, 1880, p. 6; J.A. Garfield to "My Dear Boys" (Hal and Jimmie, Garfield's sons) (Mentor, Ohio, Oct. 31, 1880) reprinted in Leach and Brown, The Garfield Orbit, p. 306.

CHAPTER 11

"A CERTAIN ELASTICITY OF ACTION"

THE ANGELL TREATY

"Whenever in the opinion of the Government of the United States, the coming of Chinese laborers to the United States ... affects or threatens to affect the interests of that country ... the Government of China agrees that the Government of the United States may regulate, limit, or suspend such coming or residence, but may not absolutely prohibit it."

--The Angell Treaty, 1881

"A VEXED QUESTION SETTLED"

--New York Times, May 6, 1881

James Burrill Angell, president of the University of Michigan, did not favor Chinese exclusion. "The absolute and formal prohibition of the laborers would be diametrically opposed to all our national traditions," he wrote Secretary of State William M. Evarts on March 11, 1880, "and would call down the censure of a very large portion, if not a majority of our most intelligent and high-minded citizens."¹

On the recommendation of Senator George F. Edmunds of Vermont, an old friend of Angell, Evarts had tapped the university president in February to head the commission to China to renegotiate the Burlingame Treaty. Evarts had emphasized to Angell that the main purpose for a new treaty was to curb "in some degree the emigration which was

threatening to flood the Pacific States." Evarts then invited Angell to Washington where he conferred with several Republican Senators (including Edmunds) and President Hayes. "He seemed deeply impressed with the importance of restraining the immigration of the Chinese," Angell later wrote of the President. "I asked if the government supposed the country east of the Rocky Mountains was ready to adopt measures restrictive of Chinese immigration. In reply I was given to understand that the action of such a Commission as they were trying to appoint would of itself have much weight in securing acquiescence in reasonable measures." Angell's mission to China would thus have two goals: diplomatic, to negotiate a new treaty; and public relations, to further convince Easterners of the wisdom of restricting Chinese immigration.²

Plainly troubled by abetting exclusion, Angell wavered in accepting the appointment. "There are some indirect methods for sustaining the emigration," he informed the Secretary of State in his letter on March 11. The U.S. could just forbid entry of Chinese men without families. "[S]uch a limitation," Angell noted, "could prevent many evils ... [and] if it could be enforced, it would almost cut off emigration." But such a solution, Angell admitted, might not be very practical. Chinese men might induce any woman to accompany them "and so immorality could be fostered." A better approach, "indeed the best which has

suggested itself to me," he added, "would be to ask the Chinese government to agree that no emigrants should come on the present contract system." Angell expounded at length on the evils of imported contract laborers. "It is notorious," he wrote, "that contractors pay the [Six] Companies for them as they would for horses, having no pecuniary dealings at all with the individual Chinaman. The contract is radically different in spirit from our ordinary business contracts." If he could abolish such contracts--the decade-old demand of the working classes--by negotiating a new treaty, Angell concluded that he would be willing to serve as diplomat "from a sense of public duty."³

Evarts accepted Angell's requirements and nominated him to be chairman of the commission. The Senate confirmed Angell on April 9, 1880. The Senate also confirmed two other commissioners to serve under him: former Assistant Secretary of State William H. Trescot, a Democrat from South Carolina, and John F. Swift, a Republican lawyer and former state legislator from California. Angell returned to Washington in the spring to get further instructions from Evarts as well as to meet Trescot. (Swift had also been invited to this meeting but "immense snow slides" had disrupted train service in the West, preventing his attendance.) In late May, a week before Evarts raced off to the Republican Convention, he, Angell, and Trescot met for four days of intensive discussions.⁴ They focused on "the

difference between European and Asiatic immigration" as well as commercial questions. Few notes remain of their meetings, but Evarts must have persuaded Angell to change his mind on importation. At no time in the course of subsequent communications, negotiations, or in the treaty itself was there any mention of contract labor. Evarts himself had little interest in the distinction between immigration and importation and he did not instruct the commission to negotiate on this subject. The only distinction he made was between immigration restriction and total exclusion. Evarts preferred restriction, he explained to Angell and Trescot (in his typically verbose manner), because of "'the widely diffused and so to speak, natural sentiment of our people in favor of the most liberal admission of foreign immigrants who desire to incorporate themselves and their families with our society, and mingle the stream of their posterity in the swelling tide of native population.'" Simply stated, the commission was to deal with two subjects: immigration restriction and commercial relations.⁵

The commissioners set sail in June, a week and a half after the Republican Convention. They arrived in China in late July and opened negotiations in Peking with Pao Chun and Li Hungtsao, the Chinese ministers, on October 1. Swift urged that the new treaty empower the U.S. to totally

exclude Chinese immigrants, but Angell and Trescot, following Evarts's advice, suggested simply the power to regulate and restrict. Swift prevailed in the first round, however, and the Americans' initial proposal was for China to recognize the right of the United States to prohibit completely the immigration of Chinese laborers. The Chinese ministers objected immediately. Pao and Li said that China wanted no modification of the Burlingame Treaty. They further stated that it was only "the rabble" and particularly "the Irish" in California who advocated exclusion, "and that the better class of Americans thought mostly the other way." The U.S. government, they concluded, was unfortunately swayed by "the influence of violent men." Deeply offended, the American commissioners rebuked them for this insult to the nation's honor, and, in Swift's words, "for making any distinction between American citizens." The Chinese apologized and said they had been led to believe these points by former minister George F. Seward. Trescot then explained the unanimity of sentiment among Americans against Chinese immigration, and he presented the platforms of the Republican and Democratic parties as proof. (The Greenback platform, interestingly, was not cited.)⁶

After this exchange Angell seized the initiative. He declared that modification of the treaty "was precisely the thing we had come to obtain." The Chinese backed down quickly and agreed to negotiate. They reviewed the

Americans' proposal and then presented a counter-proposal.

The Chinese proposal had seven main provisions:

- 1) the U.S. could "regulate" rather than "prohibit" the immigration of Chinese laborers but only if communicated to and approved by the Chinese government;

- 2) artisans would not be included as laborers (and would thus be free to immigrate);

- 3) regulation would apply only to immigrants landing in California;

- 4) the length of the regulation should be specified;

- 5) regulation would apply only to those Chinese laborers working for American citizens (thus permitting them to work in the U.S. for Chinese employers);

- 6) Chinese merchants and students should be allowed to bring their servants; and

- 7) Chinese immigrants should be fully protected by the law.⁷

The Americans rejected the second and third provisions out of hand. They also dismissed the fourth and fifth points as too constricting. Congress, Trescot explained to the Chinese, needed the power and flexibility to respond to local situations. "For example," he said, "there might be a demand for Chinese labor in the South and a surplus of such labor in California...." To legislate accordingly, the United States needed "a certain elasticity of action" and could not be bound by regional or temporal restrictions. The commissioners accepted the last two items as easy concessions and agreed to compromise only on the first provision. They accepted, as Angell and Trescot had initially favored, the term "regulate" in place of "prohibit." They refused, however, to give the Chinese government any veto power over such regulation. "We thought

that the simplest, the directest, and the only efficient plan," the three American commissioners wrote, "was to give the control of the subject to the Government of the United States." They assured both Pao and Li that the U.S. would act only with "wise discretion" and "entire justice."⁸

After 48 days, the United States and Chinese commissioners concluded negotiations. They signed a treaty on November 17, 1880. The key clause giving the United States the right to restrict Chinese immigration appeared in Article I:

Whenever in the opinion of the Government of the United States, the coming of Chinese laborers to the United States, or their residence therein, affects or threatens to affect the interests of that country, or to endanger the good order of the said country or of any locality within the territory thereof, the Government of China agrees that the Government of the United States may regulate, limit, or suspend such coming or residence, but may not absolutely prohibit it. The limitation or suspension shall be reasonable and shall apply only to Chinese who may go to the United States as laborers, other classes not being included in the limitations.

Article II exempted specific classes from such suspension:

"Chinese subjects, whether proceeding ... as teachers, students, merchants or from curiosity, together with their household servants ... shall be allowed to go and come of their own free will and accord" to the United States.

Article III entitled all Chinese in the United States to protection under the law. The fourth and final article required the U.S. to notify China of any legislation passed in accordance with the treaty and permit the Chinese Foreign

Office to discuss the subject with the Secretary of State. As Commissioner Swift remarked, this last article merely gave the Chinese the "right to grumble."⁹

China had conceded virtually everything the United States had demanded. On at least one occasion the American commissioners had threatened to leave if their conditions were not met. China's willingness to conciliate quickly can be traced to the nation's overriding desire for U.S. friendship. Throughout the year China had feared an attack and invasion from Russia. During negotiations, "The Chinese waters were filled with Russian war ships," Commissioner Swift noted; "Muscovite troops were massed on the borders and but a few hundred miles from her capital." China also feared war with Japan. Unprepared for armed conflict and unable to rely on protection from England, the Chinese hoped to curry favor with the United States.¹⁰ Their need for support outweighed their distaste for the insulting terms of the treaty.¹¹ Thus the Chinese readily consented to U.S. demands for the regulation of immigration. The two nations also signed a second treaty to improve commercial relations. This treaty limited trade duties on commerce between the U.S. and China, outlawed the opium trade, and resolved jurisdictional disputes between the two nations.¹²

The commission had done its job and done it well. Angell, Trescot, and Swift could feel justly proud of their accomplishments. Little now stood in the way of a limited

restriction of Chinese immigration. In the months to come, however, the United States government would abandon the commissioners' promises of both "wise discretion" and "entire justice" in dealing with the issue. It would also stretch "a certain elasticity of action" to the breaking point as Congress would vote to exclude Chinese immigration almost completely.

Trescot left Peking on November 20 to carry the two treaties back to Washington. The terms of the treaties remained a mystery until the New York Herald intercepted a copy and published a summary of them on January 6, 1881. Their disclosure created a furor in the Senate and Senator Edmunds demanded an investigation into how they were leaked to the press. This action sparked indignant editorials on the need for openness in government and freedom of the press, but little came of the senatorial uproar, perhaps because of the almost uniformly positive response the treaties themselves received.¹³ Scattered opposition surfaced in California complaining that the anti-immigration clauses did not go far enough, but this resistance soon melted away. Very little objection arose in the East. A group of Manhattan businessmen protested the treaties because the ban on the opium trade threatened to give Great Britain a monopoly. "A preposterous petition," the New York Herald remarked, drafted by "nincompoop New York merchants."

These comments fairly set the tone for Eastern opinion. Opposition remained virtually dormant, piecemeal at best. Such silence surprised the Democratic Chicago Times which expected an outcry from the "sentimental people"--those "adhering to the old notion that America should be an asylum, or a common sewer ... for all sorts of people from all parts of the world...." But the outcry measured few decibels. "The hostility of this class [of sentimentalists]," the Times noted, "has not been conspicuous or demonstrative...."¹⁴

To some, the treaties represented the final achievement of the outgoing administration. "Mr. Hayes and Mr. Evarts," the New York Herald proclaimed, "have won the blue ribbon of diplomacy." The New York Times voiced no complaints and the New York Tribune called the treaties "all that could be desired.... It is difficult to see any point in either of them to which any Senator can reasonably raise objection, and their ratification will probably not be delayed."¹⁵

On this last point the Tribune jumped the gun. In February, the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations deferred action on ratification and postponed consideration until the spring. The chief casualty of this delay was a disappointed William Evarts who was thus prevented from officially adding his signature to the treaties. This task was left to his successor. On March 4, 1881, James A. Garfield was inaugurated as the nation's twentieth president. He

promptly nominated James Blaine to be Secretary of State and he and the entire Cabinet were quickly approved.¹⁶

The new President ran into problems almost immediately, however, when the Senate refused to confirm his lesser appointments. Senator Roscoe Conkling [R-NY] and the so-called "Stalwart" wing of the Republican party objected strenuously to Garfield's choices, especially to the person chosen to head the New York Customhouse, the patronage-rich position once held by Vice-President Chester Arthur. This dispute, coupled with a Democratic filibuster over appointments in Virginia, obstructed regular business and deadlocked the Senate for almost two months. To resolve the partisan squabbling Garfield urged the Senate to meet in executive session. The Senate consented, and for weeks conducted business behind closed doors. Executive sessions are technically closed to the public, and the Congressional Record, which normally reports all legislative debate, does not cover such meetings. It was amid this period of executive session and intense Republican infighting between March and May that the Chinese treaties came up for consideration. As a consequence, no official record of the proceedings exists and details of the debate remain fragmentary. Even the vote was supposedly secret.¹⁷

Despite this news blackout nothing very essential was concealed. The Senate debated the Chinese treaties for just two days, on May 4 and May 5. Senator John F. Miller [R-

CA], led the charge in favor of speedy ratification. He and Senator James T. Farley, his Democratic colleague in the seat formerly occupied by the retired Sargent, presented petition after petition from politicians and the press in California that endorsed the treaties. They encountered little opposition. Only George Frisbie Hoar [R-MA] denounced the anti-immigration treaty for being "contrary to the genius of our institutions and to the general doctrine of 'the brotherhood of man.'" Hoar's position had few backers. After just five hours of debate, the Senate ratified the treaty with only two dissenting votes. The commercial treaty passed by a similar margin. The only purpose of the first treaty was to give the United States the right to restrict Chinese immigration. It had no other function. As the New York Times later noted, anyone endorsing this first treaty could no longer oppose restriction "on the ground of principle." That defense was now gone. The anemic opposition during the debate demonstrates the overwhelming, nearly unanimous support that immigration restriction had amassed in Congress. Of 76 members in the U.S. Senate, just two dared to swim against the current.¹⁸

The press appeared to be in an executive session of its own. Debate and passage of the treaties generated scant attention in the media. With ratification so taken for granted, newspapers wasted little space either reporting or

commenting on the treaties. "There will not be any appreciable opposition to the confirmation of the Chinese treaties," the New York Times accurately predicted on the eve of debate. And without a fight the press lost interest. The New York Tribune perfunctorily mentioned the passage of the treaties and then moved on to more controversial issues, such as the contested nominations. The New York Times was simply relieved. "A VEXED QUESTION SETTLED," read its headline. The only objection the Times raised was to the Senate's executive session--"in direct contradiction to the Constitution"--but not to its vote of ratification. The Times, one of the last holdouts in favor of Chinese immigration, no longer raised its voice in protest. The propriety of exclusion--the ethics of the issue--no longer mattered. The Times was on the losing end of a long battle and seemed pleased to dispose of the issue. The editor took just one parting swipe: "If California were not a doubtful state in national politics, and if the people there were not almost uniformly bitten by the anti-Chinese mania, the 'national' character of this momentous matter would hardly be so apparent." This said, it was now up to Congress to actually restrict Chinese immigration. "And when this is done, let us hope the Chinese question will disappear forever from American politics."¹⁹

Ratification of the Angell Treaty, as the first of the two pacts came to be called, marked a legal turning point in the movement to restrict Chinese immigration. The sole obstacle that had blocked the Fifteen Passenger Act of 1879 had now been eliminated. There was no doubt that when the 47th Congress convened for its official opening session in the fall immigration restriction would top the agenda.²⁰ Enactment of such a law was a foregone conclusion and debate began to focus not on if Chinese immigration would be restricted but on how and to what extent. As politicians commenced formulating bills and fine-tuning the language, various segments of the working classes finally gave indications they would coalesce behind the issue. Workers, to be sure, had expressed little interest in the Angell Treaty. Negotiation and ratification passed virtually unnoticed in the labor press. During the spring, however, cigar makers in the East began voicing hostility to Chinese laborers who were entering the trade in growing numbers. In Cincinnati, a cigar manufacturer opened a shop with forty Chinese workmen. The local chapter of the Cigar Makers' International Union went into action at once. "We have distributed 50,000 circulars warning the people of the dangers of smoking cigars made by Coolies," a correspondent reported in May. "We are pushing the union label." The union label, which specifically barred Chinese labor, was catching on in the East, and other trades endorsed it.

"When you buy Union Label cigars," noted the Carpenter, the new monthly organ of the Carpenters and Joiners' National Union, "you may be sure you are not buying cigars made by Chinese coolies, or by convicts, and that they are not from filthy tenement house factories."²¹

East of the Rockies, anti-Chinese sentiment among cigar makers was strongest in Chicago, where such sentiment had surfaced on occasion in the past. At a mass meeting in late May, "one of the most enthusiastic that the cigar-makers have witnessed for some time," workers urged smokers city-wide to honor the union label. The label provided "a means," one resolution stated, "whereby the consumer can distinguish the article viz. that made by Union men, and that made in Tenement-houses, in Prison, or by Chinamen." A circular distributed at the meeting was more direct: "Death! To Convict, Coolie and Tenement-house labor." The enthusiasm of the meeting carried into the summer. "I write to let you know that Chicago is a-fire," noted Fred Korth, the union local's secretary, in July, "i.e., a fire is burning within the bosom of every cigarmaker and manufacturer against tenement-house, convict and Coolie labor. We are united, and those fires shall never be quenched until those damnable institutions shall have been swept out of existence."²²

The terms "coolie" and "Chinaman" were becoming interchangeable. So were the terms "coolie" and "scab,"

both words of utter contempt. When strikebreakers in Coldwater, Michigan, ignored union demands, the Cigar Makers' Official Journal referred to them as "the meanest lot of Coolies that ever worked in a cigar factory in America." The term described character more than skin color. "To suppose that every Coolie is yellow," the Journal explained, "is a grave error; there are lots of them white, who possess no more manhood and are probably more cowardly." Anyone, thus, American or Chinese, could be deemed a "coolie." But to ignore the racial dimension would be a serious mistake: Chinese laborers were "coolies" because they were Chinese; white laborers were "coolies" only if they chose to be. The Chinese, unaccustomed to exercising free will, were raised to be servile. "The poor and ignorant Chinaman is to a certain degree to be pitied," the Journal noted, "for he was brought up in slavery and ignorance, and knows no better." But pitied or not, he was still the enemy. "Self-preservation prompts us to fight him, for either he or we must go down."²³

Curiously, little was said about Chinese or "coolie" labor at the annual convention of the Cigar Makers' International Union in Cleveland in September. In his keynote address to the delegates, President Adolph Strasser noted the spectacular growth of the union in the past two years. From 36 locals representing 1,250 cigar makers in 1879, the union had doubled to 74 locals in 1880 with a

membership of 3,800. The past year had been even more remarkable. The union had ballooned to 126 locals representing over 12,000 workers. With this expanding base signaling greater power, Strasser enumerated several goals for the union. He stressed the importance of abolishing both convict and tenement-house labor. He also noted the need to organize female cigar makers. He mentioned the importance of the union label but said nothing specifically on Chinese or "coolie" labor. Nor did anyone else in the course of the four-day meeting. The point is not that anti-Chinese sentiment had evaporated since the spring and summer (for surely it still existed) but that the sentiment remained scattered and fragmentary. Exclusion was by no means a priority issue.²⁴

For many workers, in fact, the issue still remained far from settled. Even as exclusionist feeling nationwide seemed to be spreading and hardening, voices of protest from the labor movement continued to speak out boldly. In Chicago, for example, during the same month that local cigar makers held their mass rally indicting coolie, convict, and tenement-house labor, Socialists gathered for one of their weekly meetings. R.W. O'Meara, recently from the West Coast, delivered a paper on the Workingmen's Party of California and "inveighed against the Chinese." The response was hardly positive. "His ideas did not meet with favor," a Chicago Times reporter noted, "all who spoke in

reply to him urging that the Chinese had as many and as inviolable rights as any other people."²⁵

Nor were the Socialists in Chicago an exception to the labor movement. In Massachusetts, Carroll D. Wright, chief of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, created an uproar when he released the Bureau's annual report for 1881. In a lengthy section on the ten-hour movement, Wright stated:

With some exceptions the Canadian French are the Chinese of the Eastern States. They care nothing for our institutions, civil, political, or educational.... They are a horde of industrial invaders, not a stream of stable settlers....

These people [the Canadian French] have one good trait. They are indefatigable workers, and docile. All they ask is to be set to work, and they care little who rules them or how they are ruled. To earn all they can by no matter how many hours of toil, to live in the most beggarly way so that out of their earnings they may spend as little for living as possible, and to carry out of the country what they can thus save: this is the aim of the Canadian French in our factory districts.²⁶

Immediately upon seeing the report, the Fall River Labor Standard singled out this section for special condemnation. The tone of the criticism, however, is instructive. The Labor Standard did not dispute the truth of the statement--indicative of the acceptance of the stereotyped image of the Chinese worker--but resented the manner in which it was framed. "The French Canadians are the 'Chinese of the Eastern States,'" the Labor Standard concurred in June. "They do work for miserable wages," and they do not care who they work for or under what circumstances. "But they do all this," the Labor Standard

explained, "not because they are French Canadians, but because they are poor.... The French come from Canada and the Chinese from China for the same reason that the English leave England, the Irish leave Ireland, the Germans leave Germany, the Spaniards leave Spain and the Italians leave Italy--simply because they are poor." After surveying the wretched economic conditions throughout the world, the Labor Standard insisted that the problem was poverty pure and simple. "It is, therefore, useless to rail against any nationality, the question must be dealt with by a broader statesmanship than that of locality, nationality or religion." The first step in solving the question, the journal declared, was a uniform ten-hour law. Such "broader statesmanship" among politicians, however, was evidently lacking.²⁷

Frustrated by legislative inaction, the Labor Standard restated its position with greater insistence the following October. Poverty was a global phenomenon, the journal proclaimed, "not peculiar to the Chinese or the French or the Irish or English or Italian or any other nationality." And poverty, not ethnicity, induced immigration and determined habits:

The Irish do not leave Ireland and arrive in thousands, penniless, in Castle Garden because they are Irish, but because they are poor. The rich Chinese don't live on rice and rats and bunk on a board. The rich Frenchman don't live on-six-and-a-half-street. The rich Irish don't crowd the steerage quarters of atlantic steamers, and fill the tenement houses of the large cities. The rich Italians don't forage ash barrels for a living.

No, these people do these things not because of their nationality or religion, but because of their poverty. This is not a race but a poverty question. The remedy is not in denying the fact but in removing the cause.

Removing the cause did not mean removing the people. Nor did it mean restricting any racial, religious, or ethnic group from coming to the United States. It did mean removing poverty. It did mean removing long hours. It did mean removing low wages. It also meant compulsory education and improved organization. It meant recognizing that the problem was class and not race. On the eve of exclusion, New England's foremost labor journal still counseled tolerance and decried bigotry. The problem was not immigration but poverty "as broad as the human race."²⁸

The ideals of the Labor Standard were not ideals universally held. Labor Bureau Chief Carroll Wright's phrase caught on in New England, much to the dismay of the French-Canadian community. Canadians throughout the region organized mass meetings to denounce Wright's remarks. They sent petitions to the Massachusetts House of Representatives criticizing Wright and the Bureau report. Legislators acknowledged their protests, and, perhaps sniffing votes, agreed to investigate the issue. They invited French Canadians to Boston to attend hearings. The Canadians complied, and, in October testified before lawmakers on the decency and respectability of the French-Canadian community. They also attacked Wright's comment as an ignorant epithet and inaccurate comparison. At the conclusion of the

hearings Wright accepted their statements and defended himself. "The words 'Chinese of the East,'" he said by way of apology, "are simply an expression used by economists to-day everywhere, to denote the kind of laborer that is migratory. That is all is meant by the term 'Chinese' here as applied to the Canadians. It is not a stigma at all."²⁹

To the French Canadians in New England, however, it certainly was a stigma. As J.H. Guillet of Lowell recounted,

About this epithet, 'Chinese of the East,' our French operatives in the mills of Lowell have been opposed by the other help and abused on account of this name. For two or three weeks they were on the fire for the people calling them 'Chinese.' They heard nothing but 'Chinese' all the time. Some had to lose their places and go off; they could not stand it.³⁰

As this comment indicates, anti-Chinese sentiment had reached the rank and file of the factory population. Whether shouting "Chinese" at French Canadians in Lowell or denouncing coolie labor in Chicago, the working classes were at last becoming receptive to the anti-Chinese movement. Exceptions still existed, and would for years to come, but with passage of the Angell Treaty in May the mood and direction of the country was clear. With Chinese exclusion simply a matter of time, the rank and file as well as organized labor nationwide finally began to lend their support.

On November 15, 1881, 107 labor leaders gathered in Pittsburgh to form a new organization, the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions, which in 1886 would rename itself the American Federation of Labor. Its first convention lasted four days. Almost two-thirds of the delegates were from Pennsylvania, most of them from Pittsburgh. The remainder were from states in the Northeast and Midwest; and a lone delegate, who would be of great significance, came from California.³¹ The convention elected John Jarrett, president of the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers, as president, and cigarmaker Samuel Gompers as one of two vice-presidents. For the first three days, delegates debated volatile political issues such as the tariff, and wrangled over membership and representation in the new organization. Some differences were settled amicably, others bred acrimony. In one dispute, Gompers squared off against Sherman Cummin, a representative of the Boston Typographical Union. Gompers argued for a strict hierarchical system of organization in which national and international unions chose delegates to the federation. Cummin urged selection by the rank and file so that actual workers and local working-class organizations could also be represented. After intense debate, delegates reached a compromise partial to Gompers. The dispute, however, presaged a fight involving Cummin on the last day of the convention.³²

On November 18, Charles F. Burgman, a California tailor representing the Pacific Coast Trades and Labor Unions, rose to make a speech. His organization had specifically sent him to Pittsburgh to make a pitch for Chinese exclusion. Burgman delivered a stinging address, describing all the familiar "evils" of Chinese labor. He then introduced a resolution calling on delegates to urge Congress to pass laws "entirely prohibiting the immigration of the Chinese into the United States." Cummin objected at once. American workers, the Boston printer said, had nothing to fear from the Chinese: "The Constitution of the United States guaranteed them the hospitality of our shores, and they should have the same rights as other foreigners." A discussion ensued, a transcript for which there is no record. The official proceedings recounted little more, and newspaper accounts did not go into detail. However, the press emphasized the fury of the exchange. The Chicago Tribune noted "the sharp fight on the Chinese question," while both the New York Times and Herald described it as "a heated debate." The Tribune added that the dispute marked one of the few divisive moments of the entire convention.³³

But Cummin was clearly in the minority. He tempered his strong objections by moving that in place of "entirely prohibiting," delegates insert the word "regulating." The amendment lost. Burgman's speech had swayed the convention.

Had he not attended, it is likely the issue would have received scant if any attention. As Gompers later noted, Burgman had crossed the country "to rouse the East to the dangers of Chinese immigration." Unlike Roach and unlike Kearney, Burgman succeeded. With a single dissenting vote--no doubt Cummin's--the convention adopted the following resolution:

WHEREAS, The experience of the last thirty years in California and on the Pacific Coast having proved conclusively that the presence of Chinese, and their competition with free white labor, is one of the greatest evils with which any country can be afflicted; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That we use our best efforts to get rid of this monstrous evil (which threatens, unless checked, to extend to other parts of the Union) by the dissemination of information respecting its true character, and by urging upon our representatives in the United States Congress the absolute necessity of passing laws entirely prohibiting the immigration of Chinese into the United States.³⁴

California had scored a major victory. It had at last convinced an organized group of workers in the East to advocate Chinese exclusion. As Samuel Gompers recounted with pride in his autobiography forty years later, the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions "was the first national organization which demanded the exclusion of coolies from the United States."³⁵ Gompers was right. The F.O.T.L.U. resolution of November 18, 1881, officially marked the start of organized labor's endorsement of Chinese exclusion. After holding out for years, union leaders in the East finally acquiesced to the demands of California. Several reasons account for this. The F.O.T.L.U. had grand

hopes for the future as a national labor body representing workers throughout the country. California, with its vibrant labor movement, could be an important force in strengthening the new organization. At the same time, events in the East, such as the cigar makers' rallies the previous spring and summer, had convinced union leaders that anti-Chinese sentiment had spread to their region and begun to take hold. Even though some voices in the labor movement decried race-baiting and remained opposed to exclusion, others had begun to endorse it. And with the momentum of "anti-coolieism" building nationwide as a result of the Angell Treaty and careful political nurturing, the working classes seemed to be riding the tide of anti-Chinese emotion. Perhaps most important, Senate ratification of the treaty in May had made exclusion all but inevitable, and labor leaders, as conscious as politicians of political issues, saw a way to gain support in the West that might no longer hurt them in the East. As a consequence, the F.O.T.L.U. jumped on the bandwagon at the last minute and narrowly beat Congress to the punch.

Working-class response to the F.O.T.L.U. Convention and anti-Chinese resolution was generally positive but muted. Workers had seen too many organizations begin with high hopes and lofty ideals only to watch them sink in discord and failure. The Chinese plank excited little debate and received little attention. Several labor papers, however,

including the Paterson Labor Standard, the Iron Molders' Journal, the Cigar Makers' Official Journal, the Irish World, and the Carpenter, printed lengthy appeals from Burgman and the San Francisco Trades and Labor Assembly urging Eastern workers to assist them in their efforts toward Chinese exclusion.³⁶ Publication suggests endorsement, but editorials in these various journals remained subdued. Meanwhile, the Boston Central Trades and Labor Union held a meeting in December and discussed the appeal of their Pacific brethren. They expressed "sympathy with their experience" and empowered the union's executive committee to call a mass meeting on the subject "if it considered it necessary." The committee never did.³⁷

Working-class response to the anti-Chinese resolution may also be inferred from the subtle changes in wording regarding the F.O.T.L.U. platform. In reporting the convention's proceedings in the Cigar Makers' Official Journal, Samuel Gompers himself transcribed the resolution as favoring "laws entirely prohibiting their importation." While this could reflect the increasingly synonymous nature of the terms "importation" and "immigration," it is noteworthy that Gompers consciously chose the less controversial phrase. The terminology used at a mass meeting of the Amalgamated Trades and Labor Union in New York is more illuminating. Members gathered at Cooper Union in January 1882 to ratify the F.O.T.L.U. convention and its

platform. Speakers themselves made no mention of the Chinese. In a series of resolutions endorsing the platform, the New Yorkers carefully rewrote the anti-Chinese plank. Instead of "entirely prohibiting the immigration of Chinese into the United States," the workers substituted: "we ... condemn the importation of Chinese single men, with their inferior standard of wants...." These deliberate changes in wording suggest a certain distancing of workers from actively pushing exclusion. Anti-Chinese sentiment is clearly evident, but the actual solution remained fuzzy. At other working-class meetings shortly after the F.O.T.L.U. Convention, such as the Labor Standard American Auxiliary Association in commemoration of John Brown's martyrdom and a two-day Socialist convention in New York City in December, the Chinese issue was conspicuously absent. The Socialists, in fact, endorsed a platform with more than a dozen demands, and ignored Chinese immigration entirely.³⁸

These disparate items indicate that while overwhelming consensus among the working classes toward Chinese exclusion had still not emerged, staunch opposition no longer existed. And, yet, to many workers, Chinese immigration remained a side issue at most. As the Fall River Labor Standard editorialized a few days after the F.O.T.L.U. convention: "The Labor Congress that has just met in Pittsburgh [sic] is the most important gathering that has met in America for a long time." The Labor Standard praised the delegates for

their honesty and the fact that they represented a quarter of a million workers. But the journal voiced criticism of the proceedings: "by a glance over the topics discussed and the resolutions adopted one would almost be tempted to ask if some shrewd capitalist hadn't chosen their subjects for them; carefully selecting the harmless topics for discussion and keeping the important questions in the back ground."

The Labor Standard rebuked the delegates for uttering "hardly a passing word" on such vital matters as working-class disenfranchisement, reduction of hours, and causes of poverty. Such items as Chinese immigration and convict labor, the journal noted, were nothing but "the skim-milk issues of the day."³⁹

In regard to the political debate on Chinese immigration, 1881 was the most quiescent year in half a decade. The year's single outstanding accomplishment--ratification of the Angell Treaty--passed with little more than a yawn. The lack of any voluble or organized opposition indicates the widespread growing acceptance of Chinese exclusion nationwide as well as the understanding that immigration restriction was imminent. Hoar's lonely defense of the Chinese in the Senate sparked ridicule rather than respect and few people anywhere lent him support. With Democrats eager to exclude the Chinese and Republicans eager to take the credit, the Angell Treaty sailed through the

Senate virtually unchallenged. As the outgoing Administration had hoped, the conduct of the treaty commission itself had helped rally public opinion in favor of immigration restriction. At the very least, it had stifled opposition. Restriction would now be fully legal and above board. Chinese exclusion had become an article of faith that no longer sparked much controversy. And organized labor, despite internal dissensions, had at last come around. But by 1881 it didn't much matter. While politicians frequently invoked the "American workingman" as the nation's glory, he generally remained a mythic entity--white, hard-working, unorganized. The demands of an F.O.T.L.U. or a Fall River Labor Standard seldom surfaced in political rhetoric. Organized labor reached people below far more than those above. Its audience was in the factories and workshops, not in the halls of Congress. Had politicians, in fact, been listening, the treaty and prospective legislation would have dealt with importation and contract labor, not with immigration restriction. But politicians had a different agenda from that of organized labor, the labor press, or rank-and-file workers. Consequently, the working classes had little direct impact on national legislation in this period and practically none at all on the Chinese exclusion debate. The final chapter of this debate was just around the corner. Anti-exclusionists, in hibernation in 1881, would revive for one

last gasp in the opening months of 1882. The upcoming exclusion debate in Congress would ultimately seal the fate of Chinese immigrants for years to come. It would also reveal the new basis and direction of the Republican party.

NOTES

1. James B. Angell to William M. Evarts (Ann Arbor, Mich., March 11, 1880), Evarts Papers, Library of Congress.

2. James Burrill Angell, The Reminiscences of James Burrill Angell (New York: Longmans, Green, 1912), pp. 128-30. Chapter six cover's Angell's mission to China.

3. James B. Angell to William M. Evarts (Ann Arbor, Mich., March 11, 1880), Evarts Papers.

4. Angell, Reminiscences, pp. 131-32; New York Herald, April 19, 1880, p. 5. While in Washington, Angell also met with Dr. Peter Parker, former missionary to China, and historian George Bancroft. "Both of them," Angell discovered, "were opposed to unlimited immigration of the Chinese. Mr. Bancroft said he did not want to see the young men of Massachusetts towns forced to compete with the Chinese who had such low standards of living."

Swift was a leading anti-Chinese activist on the West Coast. In 1888 the California legislature hired him to help argue the constitutionality of the Chinese Exclusion Act before the Supreme Court. His efforts met with success, and a year later he was appointed United States Minister to Japan. (P.O. Ray, "John Franklin Swift," Dictionary of American Biography, XVIII (New York: Scribner's, 1943), pp. 246-47.)

5. Chester Holcombe, who served as secretary and interpreter for the commission, claimed years later that Evarts, Angell, and Trescot never discussed Chinese immigration in their meetings in Washington. Angell's own account, however, refutes this. (Chester Holcombe, Outlook, April 23, 1904, pp. 993-94, quoted in Mary Roberts Coolidge, Chinese Immigration (New York: Holt, 1909, p. 153.) Evarts quoted in Document No. 132, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Transmitted to Congress, With Annual Message of the President, December 5, 1881 (Washington, 1882), p. 196. These papers, hereafter cited as Foreign Relations, include the official correspondence between the U.S. Commission and the Secretary of State, as well as other relevant documents.

6. Angell, Reminiscences, pp. 133-36, 142; letter from correspondent (Pekin, Oct. 12, 1880) in New York Herald, Dec. 6, 1880, p. 3; interview with John F. Swift in San Francisco Chronicle, reprinted in New York Herald, Jan. 28, 1881, p. 10; Foreign Relations, pp. 173-78, 196.

Angell himself noted a couple years later: "it is a very great and a very common mistake in the East[ern United

States], to suppose that the opposition to the continuance of unlimited immigration from China has been cherished or stimulated only by the Dennis Kearneys, and other sand-lot orators of his ilk. A large proportion of the most serious and right-minded citizens of the Pacific States came to believe that the public welfare required that some check should be put upon this coming of Chinese laborers." (James B. Angell, "The Diplomatic Relations Between the United States and China," Journal of Social Science XVII:II (May 1883), p. 27. The remarks were contained in a speech delivered in September 1882.)

7. Foreign Relations, pp. 178, 183, 195-98.

8. Ibid., pp. 182-83, 195-98; Angell, Reminiscences, pp. 142-44. For a summary of the negotiations from a different viewpoint, see Coolidge, Chinese Immigration, chapter 10.

9. Swift quoted in San Francisco Chronicle, reprinted in New York Herald, Jan. 28, 1881, p. 10. For a text of the treaty, see The Statutes at Large of the United States of America, from December, 1881, to March, 1883, and Recent Treaties, Postal Conventions, and Executive Proclamations, XXII (Washington, 1883), pp. 826-27.

10. Swift quoted in San Francisco Chronicle, reprinted in New York Herald, Jan. 28, 1881, p. 10. On the threat of war, see interview with Angell in New York Tribune, Feb. 22, 1882, p. 2; letter from correspondent (Pekin, Oct. 12, 1880) in New York Herald, Dec. 6, 1880, p. 3; "House" to James Gordon Bennett (Hong Kong), telegram enclosed in John Russell Young to William M. Evarts (March 4, 1880), John Russell Young to William M. Evarts (London, March 25, 1880), Evarts Papers; E.M. House to James Gordon Bennett (Tokio, Japan, March 27, 1880), John Russell Young Papers, Library of Congress; New York Herald, May 3, 1881, p. 6.

11. Li Hung Chang, the Viceroy and effective leader of China (who had met with Grant the preceding year during the ex-president's world tour), resented the United States because of America's shabby treatment of Chinese immigrants. John Russell Young, Grant's chronicler, recalled Li's concern for them and how he "used to grow angry and flushed and strike the table with his hand when he spoke of the Chinese in California." Li ultimately swallowed his anger in exchange for diplomatic support. "The readiness with which the best blood of your people to assist, in case we should be engaged in war, is the highest proof of sincerest friendship," Li wrote Young. "I truly thank your people for this noble offer." (John Russell Young to Evarts (March 26,

1880), Evarts Papers; Li Hung Chang to Young (Tientsin, Feb. 14, 1881), Young Papers.)

12. For a text of the second treaty, see The Statutes at Large of the United States of America, from December, 1881, to March, 1883, and Recent Treaties, Postal Conventions, and Executive Proclamations, XXII, pp. 828-30.

13. Foreign Relations, p. 210; New York Herald, Jan. 6, 1881, p. 9, Jan. 14, 1881, p. 3, Jan. 24, 1881, p. 6. As the editor stated, "Looking at the question practically nothing is more absurd than the effort to retain secrets in a body as large as the Senate, and especially in a matter like the Chinese Treaty, about which no one cares a farthing."

14. Chicago Times, Jan. 18, 1881, p. 7, March 21, 1881, p. 4; New York Herald, Jan. 19, 1881, pp. 3, 6.

15. New York Herald, Dec. 2, 1880, p. 6. See also Jan. 15, 1881, p. 6, March 10, 1881, p. 6. New York Times, Jan. 11, 1881, p. 4; New York Tribune, Jan. 15, 1881, p. 4. "The supremacy of American influence in the Pacific Ocean, and the unlimited development of American commerce with and in China," the Tribune stated, "may ultimately be seen to have depended upon the successful negotiation of these treaties...."

16. Chicago Times, Feb. 18, 1881, p. 3; New York Herald, May 4, 1881, p. 6. Garfield had actually settled on Blaine as early as December 1880. (Justus D. Doenecke, The Presidencies of James A. Garfield and Chester A. Arthur (Lawrence, Kansas: Regents, 1981), p. 33.)

17. Doenecke, The Presidencies of James A. Garfield and Chester A. Arthur, chapter 3, especially pp. 41-45.

18. The exact vote was never officially tallied but the Senate at the time consisted of 76 members. Hoar was undoubtedly one of the two senators to vote against the treaty. The other may well have been Henry L. Dawes, Massachusetts's other Republican Senator, but evidence is lacking. On the debate and vote, see New York Herald, May 5, 1881, p. 3, May 6, 1881, p. 3; New York Times, May 5, 1881, p. 1, May 6, 1881, p. 1. The quote from the Times is from April 4, 1882, p. 2. On California sentiment, see New York Herald, May 2, 1881, p. 5, May 3, 1881, pp. 4, 6.

19. New York Tribune, May 5, 1881, p. 4. See also May 6, 1881, p. 4. New York Times, May 4, 1881, p. 4; May 6, 1881, p. 4. Newspapers outside of the Pacific Coast were similarly apathetic concerning the treaty. "We in the other

sections of the country can lose nothing by it," the New York Herald surmised, "and it is good policy to have it taken up and considered." The Herald urged speedy action, afraid the Chinese might withdraw their approval. "The Oriental mind is suspicious and not skilled in deadlocks and parliamentary legislation...." (New York Herald, May 3, 1881, p. 6.)

20. The 47th Congress, elected in 1880, actually held two early special sessions, the deadlocked one noted above, from March 4 to May 20, 1881, and a second one from October 10 to 29. The first official session opened later in the year on December 5, 1881. (Congressional Record, 47th Cong., special session, pp. 1, 471, 505; 47th Cong., 1st sess., p. 1.)

21. Chicago Times, April 23, 1881, p. 2; Cigar Makers' Official Journal, May 10, 1881, p. 5; Carpenter, June 1881, p. 1. On the origins of the union label see Alexander Saxton, The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California (Berkeley: University of California, 1971).

22. Fred. Korth (letter, Chicago, May 29, 1881) in Cigar Makers' Official Journal, June 10, 1881, p. 4; Fred. Korth (letter, Chicago, July 10, 1881) in ibid., Aug. 10, 1881, p. 4.

23. Cigar Makers' Official Journal, July 10, 1881, p. 1.

24. Cigar Makers' Official Journal, Oct. 10, 1881, pp. 3-11. The convention met from Sept. 20-23, 1881. For Strasser's speech, see pp. 3-5.

25. Chicago Times, May 16, 1881, p. 7.

26. Twelfth Annual Report of the [Massachusetts] Bureau of Statistics of Labor. January, 1881 (Boston: Rand, Avery, 1881), pp. 469-70.

27. Fall River Labor Standard, June 25, 1881, p. 4.

28. Ibid., Oct. 8, 1881, p. 4. In its humor column, the Fall River Labor Standard sent a similar if less emphatic message: "Letter for California--The Heathen Chinees who has come across the C from the land of T is busy as a B, and Y do U want to cut off his Q, black his I, and give him L?" (Ibid., June 11, 1881, p. 7.)

29. Thirteenth Annual Report of the [Massachusetts] Bureau of Statistics of Labor. March, 1882 (Boston: Rand, Avery, 1882), pp. 82, 86. The testimony appears on pp. 3-92. Resolutions were sent from the Societe St. Jean Baptiste de Lowell, the French Canadians of Lowell, L'Association des Jeunes Gens Catholiques, and the French Canadians of Hudson. (Ibid., pp. 4-7.) For mention of other meetings, see Fall River Labor Standard, June 25, 1881, p. 4, Oct. 8, 1881, p. 4. The hearings were held on October 25, 1881.

30. Thirteenth Annual Report of the [Massachusetts] Bureau of Statistics of Labor. March, 1882 (Boston: Rand, Avery, 1882), p. 82.

31. The geographic breakdown was as follows: Pennsylvania-69; New York-8; Illinois-6; Ohio-6; Massachusetts-3; Michigan-3; Missouri-3; West Virginia-3; and one each from Rhode Island, New Jersey, Maryland, Indiana, Wisconsin, and California. (Report of the First Annual Session of the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions of the United States and Canada Held in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, December 15, 16, 17 and 18, 1881 (n.p., n.d.) in Proceedings of the American Federation of Labor 1881, 1882, 1883, 1884, 1885, 1886, 1887, 1888 (Bloomington, Ill.: Pantagraph, 1906), pp. 7-9. Note that the session is misdated. The convention actually took place November 15-18, 1881.

32. Ibid.; Samuel Gompers, Seventy Years of Life and Labor: An Autobiography, Nick Salvatore, ed. (Ithaca, N.Y.: I.L.R., 1984), pp. 69-70. David Montgomery mistakes Sherman Cummin for Samuel P. Cummings, former leader of the Knights of St. Crispin. Cummings had died in 1874. (David Montgomery, Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans, 1862-1872, (New York: Knopf, 1967), p. 464; Workingman's Advocate, March 21, 1874, p. 2.)

33. Report of the First Annual Session of the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions, p. 20; Gompers, Seventy Years of Life and Labor, p. 71; Chicago Tribune, Nov. 19, 1881, p. 5; New York Times, Nov. 19, 1881, p. 2; New York Herald, Nov. 19, 1881, p. 4.

34. Report of the First Annual Session of the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions, p. 4; Samuel Gompers, Seventy Years of Life and Labor: An Autobiography, I (New York: Dutton, 1925), p. 220.

Gompers's account of the founding convention of the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions and the anti-Chinese movement are not completely reliable. In an attempt to exaggerate the importance of the convention

(which did not need it), Gompers stated erroneously that the resolution was adopted unanimously. He also placed Denis Kearney's major visit to New York after the convention rather than before it. Finally, he misspelled the names of Kearney, Burgman, and Cummin. (Gompers, Seventy Years of Life and Labor, I (1925), pp. 69, 164.)

35. Gompers, op. cit., p. 71.

36. Paterson Labor Standard, Oct. 22, 1881, p. 4[?]; Iron Molders' Journal, Oct. 31, 1881, pp. 1-2; Cigar Makers' Official Journal, Nov. 11, 1881, p. 1, Dec. 15, 1881, p. 7; Irish World, Nov. 19, 1881, p. 2; Carpenter, Jan. 1882, p. 2.

37. Fall River Labor Standard, Dec. 17, 1881, p. 1; Paterson Labor Standard, Dec. 24, 1881, p. 1.

38. Cigar Makers' Official Journal, Dec. 15, 1881, p. 4, Jan. 15, 1882, pp. 4-5; New York Herald, Dec. 3, 1881, p. 5, Jan. 6, 1882, p. 10. On the Socialist convention, see New York Herald, Dec. 29, 1881, p. 8, Dec. 30, 1881, p. 2; Chicago Times, Dec. 29, 1881, p. 2; and Chicago Express, Jan. 7, 1882, p. 5. See also a list drawn up by a labor activist in Washington, D.C., of eleven demands, none of which mention Chinese immigration. ("C.R." (letter, Washington, D.C.) in Paterson Labor Standard, Dec. 24, 1881, p. 4.)

39. Fall River Labor Standard, Nov. 26, 1881, p. 4.

CHAPTER 12

"STATESMANSHIP OF THE HIGHEST ORDER":

THE CHINESE EXCLUSION ACT OF 1882

"Hereafter we are to keep our hand on the door-knob, and admit only those whose presence we desire."

--Chicago Times, April 25,
1882

When the 47th Congress opened on December 5, 1881,¹ many Americans were still reeling from the assassination of President Garfield the past summer. On July 2, Garfield had left the White House to embark on a trip to New England. As the President was walking arm in arm with Secretary of State Blaine in the Washington railroad depot, a gunman approached and fired two shots. One bullet struck Garfield in the abdomen and he fell at once. The President remained conscious and was carried back to the White House. Garfield lingered for two months during which time the press treated the nation to daily reports of his pulse, temperature, and respiration. In early September, doctors moved him to the healthier climate of Elberon, New Jersey, on the Atlantic Coast. His condition worsened, however, and on September 19, having served just six and a half months as President, Garfield died. The next day, Chester Alan Arthur took the oath of office as twenty-first President of the United States. One of Arthur's first actions as President was to

officially proclaim the recently ratified treaties between the United States and China in effect. He did this on October 5.²

Exclusion was now up to Congress. Republicans held a slight advantage in each chamber, three seats in the Senate and twelve in the House. They thus led the final effort toward exclusion and banked on taking the credit. On the first day of the session, Senator John F. Miller [R-CA] introduced a bill to restrict Chinese immigration. Representative Horace F. Page [R-CA], sponsor of the Fifteen Passenger Act, introduced a similar bill in the House. Miller's bill urged blanket exclusion, and the Foreign Relations Committee urged modification in keeping with the Angell Treaty. Miller complied and introduced a substitute. Effective sixty days after passage of the act, the bill read, "the coming of Chinese laborers to the United States ... is hereby, suspended" for twenty years. Any Chinese immigrant presently in the U.S. seeking to leave and return had to register at customs and secure a passport. The few Chinese exempted from the act, such as those in the diplomatic corps and their servants, required passports for entry to the nation, listing "age, height, and all physical peculiarities," as well as rank, occupation, and other essential information. Such passports had to be approved before leaving China by an American diplomat. Any Chinese entering the U.S. illegally was subject to a \$100 fine and a

year in prison. Ships landing Chinese laborers were subject to forfeiture, their captains punishable by a \$500 fine for each illegal immigrant and a year in prison. Forging a passport was punishable by a \$1,000 fine and five years in prison. To this bill, two vital amendments were later added: the first prohibited any future Chinese from obtaining American citizenship (and therefore suffrage); the second defined "Chinese laborers" as both skilled and unskilled workers, as well as miners.³

Debate on the bill commenced on February 28, 1882. Senators Miller and George Frisbie Hoar [R-MA], who had clashed over the Angell Treaty a year earlier, were the initial combatants. They set the tone as well as the terms of the debate. Miller began with a long impassioned defense of the bill. His opening statement focused on its legality, the chief stumbling block that had doomed the Fifteen Passenger Act in 1879. The new Angell Treaty not only sanctioned such a law, it demanded one. Having gone to such trouble to secure the treaty, failure to follow through would expose the United States to humiliation and dishonor. "A great nation," he said, "cannot afford inconsistency in action, nor betray a vacillating, staggering inconstant policy." Without this bill, the U.S. would be open to charges of "irresolute, fickle, feeble, or petulant" behavior. "Can we afford," he asked, "to make such a confession of American imbecility to any oriental power?"

In addition to the treaty, Miller invoked the Constitution for further authority. Chinese exclusion, he stated, would "promote the general welfare" of the nation.⁴

Having disposed of the legal and diplomatic aspects, Miller stressed the bill's overwhelming popularity. Formerly limited to the Pacific Coast, "public sentiment [against the Chinese] ... seems to have permeated the whole country." As proof, he quoted the platforms of the Democratic and Republican parties, and further claimed that each presidential candidate had favored restriction. On no issue in American history, he stated, had the nation ever been so united. Miller then launched into the familiar economic arguments. The Chinese came under multi-year contracts at wages of three or four dollars a month. They crowded whites out of work. They had practically taken over the shoe and cigar trades, as well as the laundry business. They were also monopolizing agricultural work, he added, and underselling white farm hands who were thereby "compelled to adopt their nomadic ... wandering, unsettled habits." And soon the Chinese would be heading "into the Middle and Eastern States," he warned his colleagues, "for wherever there is a white man or woman at work for wages, whether at the shoe bench, in the factory, or on the farm, there is an opening for a Chinaman." Low-paid workers undermined the nation, Miller said, echoing the cries of organized labor. "Cheap labor is not a cause of any public good, but an

effect of a vicious economic system." Poorly-paid workers would not "protect American interests, foster American institutions, and become defenders of republican government." Among the institutions threatened was public education because low wages forced white children to leave school early to supplement the family income. Worse yet, the Senator said, the competition had created a "new element in American society called the 'hoodlum.'" Immigration restriction could thus strike a dual blow at poverty and "Kearneyism."⁵

These economic and social arguments, no matter how inflammatorily posed, raised important and provocative issues. But the overriding question in the California Senator's mind was that of race. The Chinese were biologically different. They "[are] machine-like ... of obtuse nerve, but little affected by heat or cold, wiry, sinewy, with muscles of iron; they are automatic engines of flesh and blood; they are patient, stolid, unemotional ... [and] herd together like beasts." The U.S., Miller said, had no need for the "insignificant, dwarfed, leathery little man of the Orient." He called the Chinese "these stubborn invaders," and likened them to "inhabitants of another planet." Racial distinctions remained paramount. "Why not discriminate?" he asked. "Why aid in the increase and distribution over ... our domain of a degraded and inferior race, and the progenitors of an inferior sort of men...?"⁶

Because of their race and background, the Chinese were not "fit for liberty." Nor was it possible "to bring the Chinaman up to the American standard." In contrast, "European immigrants are men of like mental and physical characteristics of the American laborer." Europeans and Americans belonged to the same race and shared similar needs, wants, and habits. Like Americans, they were "free, independent men, who control their own labor and their own destiny.... One complete man, the product of free institutions and a high civilization, is worth more than hundreds of barbarians." It was "not only just and wise but humane to keep the bad sorts out." Consequently, Miller welcomed the German, the Irishman, the Scandinavian, and the Italian, "but of Chinese we have enough, and [I] would be glad to exchange those we have for any white people under the sun."⁷

Race outweighed everything. After thirty years of immigration the Chinese "remain pariahs ... [a] poisonous, indigestible mass of alien humanity." In concluding his almost two-hour-long address, Miller implored his fellow Senators to act for the good of the nation. "We ask you to secure to us American Anglo-Saxon civilization without contamination or adulteration with any other... Let us keep pure the blood which circulates through our political system ... [and] preserve our life from the gangrene of oriental civilization." With the Chinese excluded America could at

last fulfill its destiny, a land dotted with "the homes of a free, happy people, resonant with the sweet voices of flaxen-haired children...."⁸

The next day, George Frisbie Hoar rose to speak. A protege of Charles Sumner, Hoar had represented Massachusetts since his election in 1868, first in the House and later in the Senate. He had always considered himself a friend of labor. He had long supported eight hours legislation and a national bureau of labor statistics. He defended the right of workers to organize and to strike, and as a Representative in 1871, he had praised both the International Workingmen's Association and the Paris Communards. Yet Hoar was very much the patrician. Born in Concord and descended from Puritans, he had impeccable family credentials: his grandfather Roger Sherman had played a major role in drafting the Constitution; his father had helped found the Free Soil party in Massachusetts; and his brother Ebenezer, coiner of the phrase "Conscience Whig," had served as Attorney General under Grant. His first cousin was William Evarts. Hoar was less a party functionary than a genuine statesman and idealist. More than any other Republican of his generation Hoar remained devoted to the Civil War ideals of civil rights and racial equality, and his unswerving opposition to the Chinese Exclusion Act reflects his deepest convictions.⁹

Hoar began his speech on March 1 with references to the American Revolution, the nation's heritage of "natural rights" and "the pursuit of happiness," and "the great doctrine of human equality affirmed in our Declaration of Independence." Such rights and doctrines, he said, should be secure, "beyond the reach of any government." Hoar compared the Chinese Exclusion Act to the iniquitous Alien laws of 1798. He compared the persecution of the Chinese to the persecution of blacks, Indians, Jews, and the Irish. The current arguments, he said, recalled those of the discredited Know Nothings of the 1850s. "[We] must take a race at its best," he said, not its worst. Praising different ethnic groups and races, Hoar lauded the Chinese for their various accomplishments, such as inventing gun powder, the compass, and the printing press.¹⁰ On one point only did he agree with Miller: the real issue was indeed race. The underlying motive for the bill was "old race prejudice"--"the last of human delusions to be overcome." Such prejudice, he said, "has left its hideous and ineradicable stains in our history in crimes committed by every generation." The Chinese Exclusion Act would be but another crime committed against a race and against the Declaration of Independence. "We go boasting of democracy, and our superiority, and our strength," he said. "The flag bears the stars of hope to all nations. A hundred thousand

Chinese land in California and everything is changed....

The self-evident truth becomes a self-evident lie."¹¹

Hoar dissected the bill clause by clause finding fault with every section. He opposed its harsh, excessive penalties, and he opposed the intrusive powers it granted the government, such as allowing customs agents to seize virtually any Chinese visitor. Furthermore, the bill blatantly violated the Angell Treaty which permitted restriction of immigration but not total prohibition. And the treaty by no means, he said directly to Miller, demanded restriction. Hoar also criticized the class dimension of the bill. Restriction was to be "based not on conduct, not on character, but upon race and upon occupation.... With paupers, lazzaroni, harlots, [and] persons afflicted with pestilential diseases, laborers are henceforth to be classed...." Because of the wording of the bill, he told his colleagues, "you may deny to the laborer what you may not deny to the scholar or to the idler." Such distinctions he found offensive. "There may be much that is wrong connected with the coming of these people from China," he said, "especially the importation of coolies." By all means, "the trade in human labor under all disguises [should] be suppressed." But this was hardly the aim of the bill under consideration. "It is not importation, but immigration; it is not importation, but the free coming ... at whom this legislation strikes its blow." Hoar's sterling

rhetoric echoed that of practically every Eastern labor leader of the past decade and a half. "As surely as the path on which our fathers entered a hundred years ago led to safety, to strength, to glory," he said in summation, "so surely will the path which we now propose to enter bring us to shame, to weakness, and to peril."¹²

In these two speeches, Miller and Hoar had presented the two extremes of the issue, and according to most observers, the Californian had gotten the better of it. Even former advocates of Chinese immigration conceded the point. The New York Times praised Miller for his "masterly statement" that was "admirable in temper and judicial in fairness." His presentation reflected "patient study, perfect candor, and great breadth of view." The New York Tribune concurred, calling Miller's speech "calm and dispassionate." In contrast, both journals castigated Hoar. "The state of facts has wholly changed since the new treaty has been concluded with the Chinese," the Times stated. Hoar's arguments were either out of date or irrelevant. The Times attacked the "glittering generalities" and "unfortunate" aspects of his rhetoric, and added he must have been joking with his "doubtful claims" lauding the Chinese for their inventions. "It is idle to reason with stupidity like this," the Times concluded. The Tribune was hardly gentler. Chinese immigration was "one of the most difficult problems that republican government has yet

grappled with," the journal remarked. It was too important an issue to "be rightly or safely administered upon the notions of humanitarian half thinkers...." A generation had clearly passed. To the New York Tribune, once the greatest reform journal of the nineteenth century, the cause of equality and racial justice had become nothing more than a cry of sentimental "half thinkers."¹³

Miller and Hoar, let alone the Times and the Tribune, were by no means the last word on the subject. Over the next week more than twenty senators contributed to the debate. Westerners, solidly in favor of the bill irrespective of party, attacked Hoar's arguments mercilessly. First they disposed of the Declaration of Independence. Many of the signers owned slaves, Senator John P. Jones [R-NV] noted, and Benjamin Franklin himself had discoursed on the right to exclude other races from America. What better proof could one want? U.S. policy toward American Indians offered further justification. The government had established Indian reservations on which "the white men of this country have no right to set foot." Now, if all people have the right to emigrate to the U.S., Jones asked with masterful logic, how can we "prevent our own people from entering upon an Indian reservation?" In other words, if the U.S. could control mobility within the nation, surely it could restrict mobility into the nation. La Fayette Grover [D-OR] picked up the theme of American

Indians. As early as the seventeenth century, he said, William Penn had set a precedent by decrying "commingling with the Delawares." Settlers "proceeded forthwith to drive out the aborigines from the land with fire and sword," he added, and since the nation's founding, "not a single serious effort has been made to incorporate the natives of America into the body of our people as a part of the nation." By treating the natives as nothing but "aliens and outcasts," the founders set the U.S. on an exclusionary path. The treatment of Indians as well as blacks in American history certainly showed the limitations of the Declaration of Independence. "America has truly been, as she was intended to be," Grover concluded, "the asylum of the oppressed of all European nations." James H. Slater [D-OR] simply recast Jefferson's dictum. "No one will deny the axiomatic and self-evident truths of the Declaration of Independence," he said, "but that they apply in this case may well be denied." Original intent evidently favored exclusionists.¹⁴

Confident that white supremacist Southerners would ally with them, Westerners pushed the race button at every opportunity. The Chinese were little better than animals, Westerners argued, likening them to "rats," "beasts," and "swine." "The Caucasian race has a right," said Henry M. Teller [R-CO], "considering its superiority of intellectual force and mental vigor, to look down upon every other branch

of the human family." The U.S., Jones added, should admit only "favored races." Unlike "[t]his race of ours," the Chinese had no aptitude for freedom. "Every tiber in their heart, every corpuscle in their blood has been molded in the spirit of despotism." Race and civilization became one: whether skin-color or culture, it was "impossible for a Chinaman to change." Jones stated the issue baldly:

Does anybody suppose for an instant that if the African were not in this country to-day we should be anxious to welcome him? Does any reflecting man believe that he is an advantage to this country? Is it not true if his place were occupied by smaller numbers of intelligent men of our own creative race that the country would be stronger than it is?

As with blacks--whose "presence here is a great misfortune to us to-day"--so with Chinese. If the U.S. had had the choice to exclude Africans, the Civil War could have been avoided. Might not exclusion prevent another such calamity? As Jones concluded, "In dealing with foreign immigration the only question we have to consider is what is best for our own race."¹⁵

Such arguments touched a receptive chord among Southern senators. They needed little encouragement that exclusion was historically justified. The Constitution, James Z. George [D-MS] stated, "was made by the American people for themselves and their posterity, not for the human race." Samuel B. Maxey [D-TX] further clarified the issue, noting that to the Founding Fathers, "posterity" meant the "pure, unmixed Caucasian race." In a brief racist diatribe, Maxey

described the horrors of immigrants from China--"that exhaustless human hive"--overrunning the country. At least blacks, he noted in comparison, were Americans, receptive to white influence, and capable of being uplifted. The Chinese were not. He feared the impact Chinese would have on the South, not least of which was that the "naturally superstitious ... colored man ... might be carried away from Christian civilization after the Joss god of the Chinaman...." Thomas F. Bayard [D-DE], still with his eye on the White House, called the bill "full of beneficence and kindness," because it would protect the Chinese from unscrupulous importers. It would also protect the U.S. from confronting a "very ignorant and helpless people." Senator George summed up the case for many when he said the U.S. did not need "another inferior race."¹⁶

The decline of Reconstruction had transformed Southern senators into ardent exclusionists. While seven of the region's Democrats had opposed the Fifteen Passenger Act in 1879 because they looked forward to Chinese laborers competing with and underselling blacks as farm workers, the present collapse of Reconstruction state governments was undermining Republican power in the South and enabling Democrats to return to power. With conservative Democrats slowly regaining control of government machinery in the South, whites would soon possess ample weapons to subjugate the region's black population. The dawn of the Jim Crow era

of discrimination, disfranchisement, and segregation meant that the Chinese would no longer be "needed." Senator Isham G. Harris [D-TN], who had chaired the Memphis Chinese Labor Convention in 1869, symbolized this transition of Southern sentiment by casting his ballot in favor of Chinese exclusion. Fellow Southern senators deftly converted the anti-Chinese argument into a stinging attack on Reconstruction. Whites on the Pacific Coast, said Wilkinson Call [D-FL], were unanimously opposed to the Chinese, and the federal government was about to grant them relief. Why not grant the same relief to the South where whites thoroughly opposed blacks? It was unfair for Washington to cave in to the demands of one region and ignore those of another. Senator Henry L. Dawes [R-MA], a firm opponent of the bill, countered both arguments. No locality should stamp its demands on another, he said. "We are not here to legislate for New England nor for California." At which point Farley [D-CA] retorted, didn't legislators from New England and the Northeast continually ask for tariff protection? Dawes dodged the question, but the exchange reveals how Chinese immigration could bring to the surface deep-seated animosities between regions over race, economics, and federal power.¹⁷

No doubt the most unusual Southerner was Joseph E. Brown [D-GA]. Former war governor and states' rights Democrat, Brown became a Republican after the war. He

enthusiastically endorsed abolition and Radical Reconstruction in the 1860s, and became a spokesman for the "New South." Switching back to the Democratic party, he made a fortune as a railroad promoter, industrialist, and mineowner, in which he blatantly exploited convict labor. "[A] political chameleon," one historian has called him, and he certainly revealed a new color when he bucked the Southern tide on Chinese exclusion.¹⁸

Treat all immigrants fairly, Brown told his colleagues, and they will adapt to American institutions. Blacks were a perfect example: "relations between the two races had become very cordial before the emancipation," he claimed, "and the result was their Christianization." Similar results could be achieved with the Chinese. "Take the Chinaman by the hand, treat him as you now treat the African," he said, "and you will find him assimilate much more readily than he does with your hand turned against him." Brown attacked the provisions of the bill as onerous, unjust, and discriminatory. "Is there any other nation on the globe whose subjects can be seized, tried, fined, and imprisoned for the non-compliance with provisions like those contained in this bill?" The Chinese posed no threat to the United States, he said. In fact the situation was precisely the opposite:

The tide of emigration has been westward, and still westward since the days of the Goths and Vandals. Yes, it runs westward. The Chinese Empire is in a great deal more danger to-day of being overrun and subverted

by Yankee energy and Yankee enterprise on the one side, and the empire of Russia on the other, and England on the ocean, than this country is of being overrun by Chinamen....¹⁹

Brown made no effort to conceal his motives. China represented a vast market, "a wide field open for us. No people on earth are more interested in that country than the people of the United States." Sounding the tocsin of American imperialism, he added: "we ought to build up a boundless trade there, and it ought to be a great field for white men's energy and thrift and gain." As a Southerner, Brown was especially concerned with the cotton trade for which China seemed the ultimate market. "The 400,000,000 of people in the Chinese empire, use cotton almost exclusively for clothing," he said, and American cotton was the best in the world. Exclusion would only insult China and threaten this potential economic bonanza. Except for his accent, Brown sounded identical to the Yankee capitalists he so evidently admired and modeled himself after. He spoke for a powerful but very small segment of the New South. He would be the only Democrat and the only Southerner in the Senate to cast his vote against the first version of the Chinese Exclusion Act.²⁰

Brown may have been an interesting anomaly but as a Southerner his influence did not extend very far. From the outset it was clear that Westerners of both parties and Democrats of all regions were overwhelmingly in favor of the bill. The crucial test would be among Republicans east of

the Rockies. For years the Republican party had used the issue of Chinese immigration restriction for electoral purposes. Now their true colors would be shown. Indeed, only a tiny handful joined Hoar in principled opposition to the bill. Yet only a similarly small handful expressed unqualified support. Angus Cameron [R-WI], for example, recoiled from "[t]his overflowing Asiatic hive," and, echoing Blaine, stated: "I am one of those who believe that either the Anglo-Saxon will possess the Pacific slope or the Mongolian will possess it."²¹ Most Republicans in the Northeast and Midwest, however, found themselves in a quandary, trying to reconcile the glowing ideals of the Civil War with the grimy problems of the Gilded Age. They debated the bill furiously, and the infighting among them illustrates the fundamental changes through which the party had gone. It also reveals the new direction in which the Republican party was heading.

George F. Edmunds [R-VT] helped lead Republicans along this new path. The distinguished senator, often spoken of for the presidency, had represented the Green Mountain State for sixteen years. In 1879, he had adamantly opposed Fifteen Passenger Act because it violated the treaty and international law. But three years later things had changed. Edmunds took time out--despite his preoccupation with an anti-polygamy bill he had just authored to outlaw "Mormon abuses" in the Utah Territory--to play a prominent

role in the Chinese exclusion debate. Challenging Hoar as spokesman for New England, the Vermont native was one of the few Senators to command respect across party lines. When Edmunds rose to speak on March 7, the mood of the chamber changed abruptly. "A score of senators who had been chatting and smoking in the cloak-rooms hastened to their seats," the Chicago Times reported. "Others who were writing letters at their desks promptly laid aside their papers. Crowds of correspondents trooped into the reporters' gallery, and every utterance of the famous Vermont Senator received undivided and interested attention."²²

Edmunds's words surprised his listeners. He emphasized the futility of trying to overcome differences of race. Integration and amalgamation sounded nice, he said, but they simply did not work:

If you go off into the broad modern civilization that free traders, and free-thinkers, and free-lovers, and free-everybodies maintain, of course you must say that all mankind are of one kin, that they are of one nature, that they are of one destiny, that they are of one sympathy, and that they can be poured into one common receptacle everywhere, with mutual advantage to every one of the human beings who is thus brought into contact and amalgamation with other societies and human beings; but the misfortune about it is that the common sense, the common information, and the common observation of everybody has demonstrated that that is not true.

Race differences remained unbridgeable. He did not believe that the people of Vermont had any desire for immigrants from Africa much less China. Nor, he added, his eye on

Hoar, did the people of Massachusetts. God had wisely separated the races into different parts of the globe and it would be folly to tamper with this natural order.²³

Sounding more and more like a Westerner, Edmunds stressed how different the Chinese were in culture, religion, and modes of thought. "There is no common ground of assimilation," he said. He cited the South as proof that two essentially different races could not live peacefully side by side--at least in a democracy. The fact is, Edmunds concluded, "no republic can succeed that has not a homogeneous population." Heterogeneity had destroyed ancient Greece, it presently cursed the South, and in the Far West "it has promoted political discord and discontent among our fellow-citizens...." Just as the first duty of a nation is self-preservation, Edmunds stated, the first duty of a government is creating borders and deciding who may join and who may not. The great forces motivating the Declaration of Independence were separation, self-government, and the determination to choose who could be part of the polity. In summation, Edmunds said, "every people and every church, every little community ... must decide what persons other than itself are to be received into it and become a part of it."²⁴

Edmunds's approach was a cautious one, combining prudence and expediency. He did not condemn the Chinese nor call them inferior, he simply stressed their differentness.

The role of government was to acknowledge this difference and adjust social policy accordingly. Americans had every right to exclude anyone they chose, Edmunds argued, and he justified this right in the name of morality. Exclusion was moral. Why? Not because it was right but because it was popular. After all, Edmunds said in an exchange with Hoar, "who is to decide ... what the moral law is? Is it he [Hoar]? Is it I? Not at all. It is all; it is the body of the people organized into a government; they and they alone can decide." Here was the key: Edmunds linked morality to majority rule. What "the body of the people" deemed moral was ipso facto moral. Right and wrong could be settled by a popularity contest. This emphasis on "morality"--in place of idealism, justice, or right--is instructive, and crucial to understanding the transformation of Republican party ideology. The idealism that had launched and sustained the Republican party in the 1850s and 1860s now only constricted it. Without the mandate of the Civil War or an equally strong imperative, Republicans had to restructure their principles to suit the times. What better principle than morality, especially one based on popular approval? In legitimating exclusion, Edmunds turned pandering for votes into a noble cause. Idealism only induced ridicule. Morality--diffuse, open-ended, and malleable--offered far greater potential.

Republicans, of course, had always invoked morality to defend their policies. In his debates with Stephen Douglas in 1858, Lincoln had voiced prevailing Republican sentiment in attacking slavery as "a moral wrong." Such moral judgments had appealed to a higher source, above the Constitution and above the government. Morality transcended laws made by men. But passage of a generation forced Republicans to redefine their terms; the outmoded basis of morality had to be recast. Edmunds shrewdly articulated this new basis: "The ground upon which we legislate against free love, and polygamy, and all other kinds of moral wickedness, over which we have control by legislative power, is that it belongs to the will of the people ... to decide upon the conduct of persons who are in it or who are to come to it."²⁵ Not least of the advantages of this new basis for morality was its flexibility. With a few twists of logic one could justify anything in the name of morality, even racism if that was "the will of the people." Such reasoning would have repercussions well beyond the Chinese Exclusion Act: it would facilitate Northern acceptance of Jim Crow legislation in the South and foreshadow the "separate but equal" doctrine established nationally fourteen years later in Plessy v. Ferguson. Edmunds's argument conceded that the role of government--and the Republican party--was no longer to lead the people but to follow them (at least as politicians interpreted them).

Like patriotism for scoundrels, morality became the last refuge of the Republicans.

"The effect ... [of Edmunds] announcing his hearty adhesion [to] the principle underlying this bill, and of the brief but unanswerable argument with which he justified it," the Chicago Times remarked, "was even more than commonly noticeable." Edmunds had deftly argued against Chinese immigration and given honorable reasons to (in his words) "suspend it for a little while." "How should that shock humanity?" he asked. Then came the clincher: despite his support for exclusion Edmunds opposed the bill! Twenty years, he said, was simply too long. Such a term violated the treaty provision stipulating "reasonable" suspension of immigration. He urged colleagues to endorse a ten-year ban. After ten years of excluding Chinese immigrants, he said, the U.S. could review the experiment and either renew it or repeal it.²⁶

Edmunds's speech opened the floodgates. Republicans latched on to his moral argument and spent more time debating the length of exclusion than exclusion itself. Indeed, Senator John Sherman [R-OH], the former Treasury Secretary and one of the most influential Republicans of the Gilded Age, remarked that length "is the most important feature of the whole bill." He suggested suspending Chinese immigration for five years. "They are not a desirable population;" he noted, "they are not the kind of immigrants

which have been useful to our country.... The Chinese are peculiar in every respect." James W. McDill [R-IA] also favored a shorter period of suspension as did John I. Mitchell [R-PA] who said he would vote for "reasonable regulation of Chinese immigration." Justin Morrill [R-VT] also recognized the nation's growing need to close its gates. On March 8, by a tie vote of 23-23 (with 30 not voting), the Senate rejected an amendment to the bill reducing the period of exclusion to ten years. The next day the Senate reconsidered the amendment and rejected it again 21-20.²⁷

To Republicans, the length of exclusion--rather than exclusion itself--remained the focal point. Party members lined up to endorse the ends of the bill rather than the means. This distinction was best exemplified by Orville H. Platt [R-CT], then at the beginning of a long and distinguished career in the United States Senate. In a speech on March 8, Platt criticized the bill sharply. "This is race legislation," he said, and "all the old arguments that we heard about the danger of social equality between the negro and the white man are resurrected and rehabilitated for the occasion." He denounced the bill as unprincipled and unjust. "Harsh in its provisions, severe--I will not say barbarous--in its penalties, the bill reads more like an enactment of the seventeenth century than like a wise, humane, and beneficial statute of the present age

and time." But idealism plainly had its limits. "Do not misunderstand me," Platt explained. "I do not say the Chinaman is the equal of the Anglo-Saxon socially or intellectually." Then, indicating Edmunds's influence, Platt urged a solution that would not "improperly" restrict Chinese immigration. "[I] would vote for a bill which should prevent them coming to this country in such numbers as to endanger our political and social institutions." Platt suggested a compromise that would limit China to 1,000 immigrants per year. The Connecticut senator may have clothed his sentiments in more elevated rhetoric, but in the end his position differed little from that of Edmunds.²⁸

Edmunds had masterfully steered his party through the Scylla and Charybdis of equality and exclusion, and fellow Republicans scurried to climb aboard. With the morality of the bill accepted, they spent the bulk of their time mouthing pieties and debating minutiae. The terms of the debate had plainly shifted: no longer focusing on the justice of exclusion, Republicans quibbled over details. Samuel R.J. McMillan [R-MN], for example, successfully pushed for an amendment delaying implementation of the Exclusion Act from sixty days after passage to ninety.²⁹ Did it really matter? Would a month make any difference? And was there really much difference in excluding Chinese immigrants for five years versus ten years or ten years versus twenty? Or in setting up a quota at a thousand per

year? Such details were not trivial but in comparison to the exclusion vs. no exclusion debate they scarcely mattered. The decision to restrict had been accepted. Republicans embraced it, the party campaigned on it, and leading senators endorsed it. Morality had triumphed. The direction of the Republican party was crystal clear: The Chinese would have to go.

Only the tiniest handful disagreed, none more eloquently than Joseph R. Hawley [R-CT]. The former Connecticut governor, who had boldly defended Chinese immigration (and importation) following the introduction of Chinese laborers at North Adams in 1870, had grown more determined in the intervening years. Comparing the proposed Chinese Exclusion Act to the Alien and Sedition laws, the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, and the Fugitive Slave Act, Hawley stated:

A few words in the proposed law may be quoted for a century, not as the opening lines of the Declaration of Independence are quoted, as a comfort, a prophecy, a battle-cry, but on the same page as the edict of Nantes, the innumerable decrees tormenting the Jews, the belated hobgoblin idiocies that are now torturing the race in some parts of Europe, [and] the barbarisms that were once heaped upon the ... negro....

Hawley enumerated all the arguments in favor of exclusion and found them wanting. He did not doubt the authority of the U.S. to ban the Chinese, but with his eye on Edmunds, remarked: "Perhaps we are confounding right and power." Like Hoar, Hawley understood the significance of the act as a milestone and a precedent. Whatever defenses his

colleagues employed, whichever way they deigned to vote, the debate over Chinese exclusion had revealed the passing of a generation. In an understatement few may have noticed, Hawley concluded: "Our zealous and radical republicanism is fading."³⁰

Minutes later the Senate voted. Senate Bill Number 71, inoffensively titled "An act to execute certain treaty stipulations relating to Chinese," passed 29-15 with 32 not voting. Twenty Democrats and nine Republicans voted in favor. All five Republicans from the West supported the bill; so did four Republicans east of the Rockies: Angus Cameron [WI], Philetus Sawyer [WI], Eugene Hale [ME], and Warner Miller [NY]. Fourteen of the fifteen negative votes came from Republicans. Joseph E. Brown of Georgia was the lone Democrat in opposition.³¹

The bill came up for consideration in the House of Representatives five days later. Over the next week and a half, some seventy Congressmen took part in the deliberations. Despite the breadth of participation, speakers added very little to the debate begun in the Senate. Race remained the lightning rod for discontent. The Chinese immigrant is "loathsome ... revolting ... a monstrosity," said George C. Hazelton [R-WI]. He "lives in herds and sleeps like packs of dogs in kennels." Roswell F. Flower [D-NY], the future governor of New York, called him "an eating, drinking, opium-smoking, working automaton."

Addison S. McClure [R-OH], after describing the U.S. as "a continental menagerie of nationalities, a sort of ethnological animal show," felt the line had to be drawn somewhere: "Our civilization, which is the most potent in the world in blotting out race distinctions and amalgamating nationalities, is utterly powerless to efface in a single aspect the primeval national characteristics of the Chinaman. He is literally iron-clad to our institutions." J. Hyatt Smith [R,D-NY] attacked the Chinese for their "profane orgies of heathenism," while Albert S. Willis [D-KY], a chief sponsor of the bill, called them "beasts of the field." Representatives employed imagery and metaphor to meet their needs. Campbell P. Berry [R-CA] described "the yellow serpent ... twining its coils about the industries of the Pacific coast," while John C. Sherwin [R-IL] implored his colleagues to ensure "that the pure bullion of Anglo-Saxon civilization is not debased by the alloy [of] effete orientalism." Few topped William H. Calkins [R-IN]. The Chinese "spread mildew and rot throughout the entire community," he said. Permit them to enter, and "you plant a cancer in your own community that will eat out its life and destroy it...."³²

Representatives invoked the usual arguments. The Chinese were servile, debased, despotic. They were "mammon-worshippers," their civilization "fossilized." "History records no instance in which a Chinaman ever fought for his

liberty." "Chinese pagodas" would replace "the Cross." Immigration must be "homogeneous." Race differences would ignite another civil war. Exclusion would protect the nation, protect the workingman. It would neither hurt trade nor violate the treaty. The West Coast was unanimous. The nation as a whole endorsed it. No excuse save "mawkish sentimentality" could stand in the way. Providing a fitting commentary on the bill, Aylett H. Buckner [D-MO] stated: "It performs the last funeral rite over the dead body of the false and nonsensical dogma of governmental policy that 'all men are created equal.'"³³

Like their colleagues in the upper chamber, Republicans fell into three groups: those in favor of the bill, those opposed to the bill on principle, and those opposed to the bill but not restriction itself. The breakdown of the last two groups mirrored the Hoar-Edmunds split in the Senate with the former group representing by far the smallest number. No more than a half dozen Republicans who spoke in opposition to the bill cited principle as a major reason. Godlove S. Orth [R-IN], a Republican since the party's earliest days, labeled the bill "a backward step" in the nation's history. So what if the Chinese were "pagans," he asked. Religious freedom remained the "crowning glory" of the United States, a nation open to all faiths on the globe. The bill set a dangerous precedent. "By its passage," he said, "you strike a blow at the right of migration which

might hereafter affect the emigrant from other lands than China." But Orth was in a distinct minority. Most Republicans opposing the bill attacked specific items--the length of exclusion, the passport requirement, the penalties for violation--but supported the bill's intent. James Tyler [R-VT], for example, thought exclusion for ten years "long enough." So did George D. Robinson [R-MA], Robert M.A. Hawk [R-IL], and Mark H. Dunnell [R-MN], all of whom said they would support exclusion for ten years but not twenty. Henry W. Lord [R-MI] called the bill "a departure from [the] great and cardinal principles ... of human rights" and American tradition, but endorsed a ten-year ban nonetheless. Nathaniel C. Deering [R-IA] voted against the bill but was "willing and anxious" to support "reasonable restrictions." Moses A. McCoid [R-IA] also opposed the bill but at the same time called the Chinese "the antipodes of mental structure, of moral growth, of social character, and of political faith."³⁴

Perhaps the most telling comments came from Representative Ezra B. Taylor [R-OH]. Although little-remembered today, Taylor was the focus of considerable attention at the time by virtue of his representing the district of the martyred James Garfield. Inheritor of this Republican mantle, Taylor articulated Civil War ideals as eloquently as Senators Hoar and Hawley. The anti-Chinese bill, Taylor said on March 16, was "unnecessary" and

"unspeakably dangerous." It "changes and revolutionizes the traditions and principles of this country." In excluding the Chinese,

we know not when the next wall will be erected, nor where its foundations will be laid.... It is the first break in the levee.... I would deem the new country we will have after this bill becomes law as changed from the old country we have to-day as our country would have been changed if the rebellion of 1861 had succeeded.

The bill was based "on passion and prejudice," he claimed. "We talk in regard to the differences between races; and I am astonished at the way we talk. I know our books speak of it learnedly. There are heaps of nonsense in some books." It all boiled down to white v. Chinese because whites had the ballot. Reciting the anti-slavery legacy of his party, Taylor proclaimed: "Others may say 'throw sentiment aside,' but the Republican party is founded on sentiment, and it cannot 'throw sentiment aside.'" But then Taylor added: "I hope my remarks have not been understood as favoring a further immigration of the Chinese.... I want no more of them. But I talk only of this bill, and I do not mean to be in the least understood as favoring that immigration.... I deplore their presence here as much as any man...."³⁵

Even those representatives strongly opposed to the Chinese Exclusion Act emphasized their hostility to Chinese immigrants. Racism and the new morality went hand in hand. As Charles N. Brumm, a pro-exclusion Greenback-Republican from Pennsylvania, noted with only the slightest of

exaggeration: "There is not one gentleman who spoke on the other side of this question that has not acknowledged that Chinese immigration is an evil; not one of them; they only pick flaws in the bill." George D. Wise [D-VA] noted the same phenomenon: "no gentleman in this discussion has dared ... to put himself on record as entertaining the opinion that Chinese immigration is desirable, and that it ought not to be restrained and limited." On a far nastier note, Aylett Buckner remarked: "I congratulate my Republican friends who support this bill that they have emancipated themselves for once from the influence of transcendental theorists, sublimated humanitarians, Jesuitical ecclesiastics, [and] woman suffragists...."³⁶

Sentiment and discourse in the House thus mirrored that of the Senate. Only a few new points were raised. William R. Moore [R-TN] compared the legislation to Edmunds's polygamy bill and found it curious that some exclusion advocates could attack the Chinese for having no wives and then attack Mormons "solely because they were too much married." This point, however, was relatively minor. The few surprises in the debate came from the handful of Democrats who opposed the bill. Charles E. Hooker [D-MS], a former rebel who had lost an arm fighting for the Confederacy, denounced all the arguments based on racial differences and non-assimilation. Such charges had long been waged against blacks, he said, who had been termed

"ignorant, uneducated, uneducable ... unreligious ... [and] far more pagan than the Chinese." But events of the past twenty years had proved these charges baseless, for "when the manacles were stricken from their limbs by the proclamation of Mr. Lincoln and the results of the war, they sprung at once into the arena flaming with the intelligence of the nineteenth century. They have occupied your pulpits, your school-houses and your halls of legislation...." Such swift advancement, Hooker argued, revealed the "civilizing" influence of American institutions:

I am not afraid, therefore, when I see the results upon the colored people, when I see the intelligence they have attained, when I see their religious feelings, (for they are an eminently religious people) when I see the wisdom and prudence which they manifested during the war of the rebellion ... and which they have manifested since--I am not afraid, are you, gentlemen, that your civilization and your power to plant the cross of Christ and the principle of liberty shall find in the oldest nation of the world a people capable of appreciating them? ...

It is true that the Chinaman has the misfortune to have a yellow skin and almond-shaped eyes. It was the misfortune of the colored man that he had a black skin. But even with that misfortune our civilization reached him, and he is now a full-fledged American citizen, with the ballot in his hand, and with all the powers, duties, and responsibilities of an intelligent American freeman. Now do you not think that if we could produce these results on the African we might try our influence on the Chinaman, particularly as they are a people always distinguished for their intelligence?

Hooker certainly stood apart from his colleagues, both Democrats and Southerners. Considered one of "the most graceful speakers in the House," Hooker had a voice "clear, strong, and musical." His demeanor was "natural and dignified," the Chicago Times noted, and "his empty sleeve"

only added distinction to his presence. Yet the views of this reconstructed Southerner may not have been totally ingenuous. According to the Chicago Tribune, the four-term Mississippi Congressman wanted to import Chinese laborers to the South.³⁷

Two other Democrats bucked the tide of their party and denounced the bill. Leopold Morse, the only Democrat from Massachusetts, called the bill "unjust to the Chinese ... dishonorable to us ... [and] injurious to our commercial and manufacturing interests...." It was, he said, "un-Democratic, un-Republican, un-American." Augustus A. Hardenbergh [D-NJ], who had argued eloquently against the Fifteen Passenger Act, agreed. The U.S. could not simply "close its ports," he said. Noting that the nation had paid dearly to extirpate the sin of slavery, he declared: "that nation which refuses the common dictates of humanity to another, whatever its condition, must pay the penalty of that disobedience to a diviner law, which is but the law of justice and of right." Morality was not, as Edmunds had stated, subject to majority rule. Hardenbergh invoked a higher authority, and echoing Hoar and many a worker, he claimed: "I would make by laws all such contracts [to import labor] void, but I would not close my country's ports to the inhabitants of whatever clime who may seek acquaintance with the institutions of freedom."³⁸

Hardenbergh's words (like those of Orth and everyone else) had scant impact on members of his party or those of the opposition. On March 23, the House of Representatives voted 167-66 (with 59 not voting) in favor of the Chinese Exclusion Act. The Republicans contributed almost all the negative votes, but as a party split evenly, 61-62 (with 25 not voting). Only four Democrats joined the opposition: Hooker, Morse, Hardenbergh, and Edmund S. Bragg [WI]. Notable affirmative votes included Democrat Abram Hewitt of New York as well as Republicans Joseph G. Cannon of Illinois and William McKinley of Ohio. The regional breakdown was pronounced. All seven Western Representatives voted in favor. The South also supported the bill overwhelmingly, 58-3 (with 20 not voting). New England presented the opposite picture, one in favor, 19 opposed, and 2 not voting. New England Republicans, with Maine included, opposed the bill unanimously, 0-20 (with 4 not voting). Republicans from the mid-Atlantic states and the Midwest were more evenly divided. Mid-Atlantic Republicans favored the bill 17-13 (with 11 not voting). Midwestern Republicans favored the bill 34-26 (with 8 not voting). The data thus suggest an image of increasing opposition to exclusion among Republicans as one moves from west to east across the country but individual states belie this. Illinois and Michigan Republicans, for example, favored the bill 15-5 (with 2 not voting), while Republicans in Iowa and Kansas

voted the opposite, 0-11 (with one not voting). The chief factor among Republicans in the Midwest was the local economy: those from industrialized states tended to be more in favor of exclusion than those from agricultural states. Taken altogether, three factors--in varying degrees--influenced the vote: region, party affiliation, and local economy.³⁹

The Republican press generally applauded the bill, some editors more enthusiastically than others. The Chicago Tribune lavished praise on the bill as the fulfillment of campaign promises while the New York Times simply considered it a fait accompli. The issue had long since been settled, the Times claimed, both by the Congressional vote in 1879 on the Fifteen Passenger Act and the Angell Treaty ratified in 1881. Consequently, all the recent speeches in Congress and comment in the press "are absurdly out of order.... Time and again, both political parties have promised to do what has now been done, and nobody has raised a voice of protest or disavowal of responsibility for such promises." Denying that the U.S. need serve as a home for the oppressed of all nations--a point made by Hoar and others--the Times, paraphrasing Edmunds, scoffed: "as for the assertion that we have no moral right to say who shall and who shall not come into the country, no true American will for one moment admit a doctrine so dangerous, or make a confession so weak." The New York Tribune was more circumspect, noting

(in what could serve as the new slogan for the Republican party in the Gilded Age), "sometimes expediency is statesmanship of the highest order." Like many Republican journals, the Tribune poked holes in the bill but defended Chinese exclusion. "Let it be granted, for the sake of argument," the paper stated, "that everything ought to be done that we have a right to do to exclude or restrict Chinese immigration." And yet the Tribune was clearly neither pleased nor proud of the bill's intent and shifted the blame from individuals to an amorphous and vague national consensus: "However repugnant the bill may be to our national sense of justice, it cannot be denied that public sentiment generally upholds the measure as being necessary and expedient, and not to be rejected for merely sentimental reasons." The Tribune buttressed this claim with a quote from an anonymous Democratic Representative. "'I am opposed to the whole theory of the bill,'" the Congressman remarked, "'and would like to vote against it, but I must 'keep solid' with my constituents....'" The Tribune concluded: "This was the feeling, doubtless, of many others--both Democratic and Republican--who voted for the bill virtually under duress."⁴⁰

With this comment we have returned full circle: who was behind the Chinese Exclusion Act? Was it the work of crafty politicians? Or were the nation's elected leaders simply responding to the will of the American people? After

so many years of agitation on the subject it was no longer easy to tell. Politicians angling for office had no doubt swung many people to their side, and the momentum in turn, as the unnamed Congressman's comment indicates, had forced other politicians to fall into line. "Public opinion" and politicians fed on each other and by 1882 it had become difficult to separate the two forces. As the rather disinterested Chicago Times noted, "Among the remarkable social phenomena of the time is the change of public opinion on the 'Chinese question' which has taken place within the last three or four years."⁴¹

Perhaps the nation had indeed come around to Chinese exclusion. If so, the Angell Treaty Commission had fulfilled one of its main tasks: converting the American public in favor of Chinese immigration restriction. One of the converts was Angell himself. Speaking before the American Social Science Association in September 1882, the chief negotiator of the new treaty emphasized the dangers of blind idealism:

The problem of harmonizing so alien a civilization as that of China with ours is probably more difficult than we in the East have supposed, and a certain degree of caution, not inspired by narrow hatred but by a sincere, and humane, and generous regard for the Chinese themselves, as well as for our own countrymen, will prove to be wise....

That it is possible that Chinese laborers may, if unrestricted come to us more rapidly than is well, either for them or for us, is certainly true. Reason about it as we may, I believe the fact will be found constant, that if they are brought rapidly, in large numbers, into any Western country, there will be

unpleasant friction between them and the Western people....

A suspension of Chinese immigration for five years, Angell concluded, might clear away this "unpleasant friction." If the treaty commissioner himself, once a firm advocate of unrestricted Chinese immigration, could reverse his own position in less than two years, there is little reason to doubt that Americans nationwide could also. "It has been approved by the press and the people, outside of New England," the Chicago Tribune observed, "almost without distinction of party."⁴²

But power still remained the core of the issue: politicians, not "public opinion," directed the engine of exclusion. "[T]he country may as well understand," a New York Herald correspondent reported from the capital, "that here in Washington ... the anti-Chinese question attracts interest mainly because it is supposed to be a means of carrying California, Oregon and Nevada next fall." And looking ahead two years, Representative Leopold Morse [D-MA] commented that those three Western states "are supposed to hold the balance of political power in the next Presidential contest...." Politics, politics, politics. Perhaps the Chicago Tribune put it best. With Republicans, who held a majority in Congress, able to take credit for the exclusion act, they could reap the benefits in the West and let the issue disappear in the East. Thus, said the Tribune, "there will be no chance for another Morey letter in 1884."⁴³

Concern over the political impact of the bill dominated the press as the nation waited anxiously for the President's response. Would Arthur sign the bill or veto it? No one knew for sure. Chester Alan Arthur may have been the most unlikely person to have ever occupied the office of President. Prior to his nomination for Vice-President he had not been elected to a single office, and allegations of corruption had forced him to resign in 1878 from the only important position he had ever held, Collector of the Port of New York. Arthur was not without scruples, however. A former abolitionist, he had gained fame as a young man by winning the freedom of two slaves whose owner had taken them to New York. During the Civil War he rose to the rank of quartermaster-general and in 1868 he astutely aligned with pro-Grant forces. A savvy politician with high-placed connections, Arthur became a chief lieutenant in Roscoe Conkling's "Stalwart" machine in the Empire State. To placate Conkling and the pro-Grant wing of the party (which were indispensable to winning New York), Garfield offered him the second spot on the ticket in 1880. Inexperienced, widowed, and always impeccably dressed, the dapper Arthur accepted the nomination, and uttered scarcely a word throughout the campaign. His few months as Vice-President were equally undistinctive.⁴⁴

When Garfield's assassination suddenly elevated Arthur to the Presidency on September 20, 1881, few people knew

where he stood on anything. The "Acting President," as critics derisively called him, had expressed no opinion on Chinese immigration, and his first public comment on the subject was anything but clear. "The prompt and friendly spirit with which the Chinese government, at the request of the United States, conceded the modification of existing treaties should secure careful regard for the interests and susceptibilities of that government in the reenactment of any laws relating to Chinese immigration," he explained in his annual message to Congress in December 1881.

"Legislation is necessary to carry its provisions into effect." Arthur thus opened the door to immigration restriction but allowed himself wide latitude for judging prospective legislation. Arthur had made no public statements on the subject in the intervening months, and when the exclusion bill appeared on his desk in late March the President had not yet decided whether to sign or veto it.⁴⁵

So uncertain was the President that he held three Cabinet meetings on the subject during the next week. The second one, on March 31, lasted four hours. The press afterward reported that the President's advisors were evenly split. Three Cabinet members urged approval of the bill: Secretary of War Robert T. Lincoln (son of the former president), Secretary of the Interior Samuel J. Kirkwood, and Postmaster General Timothy Howe. Three other Cabinet

members urged a veto: Secretary of State Frederick T. Frelinghuysen (who had replaced Blaine), Secretary of the Treasury Charles J. Folger, and Attorney General Benjamin H. Brewster. And the seventh member, Secretary of the Navy William H. Hunt, was, according to the Chicago Times, "on the fence without definite opinions." Perhaps more significant was that Folger and Brewster opposed only the length of exclusion, not exclusion itself. "There is," the New York Herald concluded, "... a general agreement [in the Cabinet] that it would be well to suspend immigration of Chinese for a time." Meanwhile, letters and telegrams poured in from around the country trying to sway the President. Several influential Republicans, for various reasons, urged a veto. Former President Grant remarked that he "was not in favor of the Chinese coming to this country," but found the legislation "objectionable in its present shape." The venerable Thurlow Weed, who had opposed the Fifteen Passenger Act on principle, modified his views and now urged suspension of immigration for five years--but not twenty. And the eminent Wendell Phillips, former abolitionist and labor reform candidate, reiterated his long-held "detestation of all restrictions on Chinese immigration as inconsistent, absurd, unjust and wicked." But Arthur kept everyone guessing. The only hint came from a friend who noted that the President had been much impressed by Edmunds's speech.⁴⁶

Arthur made his decision the morning of April 4. At 1:20 that afternoon his private secretary O.L. Pruden carried the President's message to the Capitol and placed it on the desk of Senate pro tem David Davis. Davis immediately suspended ordinary business so that the message could be read. "After careful consideration of Senate bill No. 71, entitled 'An act to execute certain treaty stipulations relating to Chinese,'" the Senate Secretary recited aloud, "I herewith return it to the Senate ... with my objections to its passage." Arthur's veto message was clear and direct. Seven times he quoted the phrase from the Angell Treaty that permitted the U.S. to "regulate, limit, or suspend" Chinese immigration but not to prohibit it. The twenty-year suspension, Arthur stated, violated this clause of the treaty and thereby presented "a breach of our national faith." Arthur feared that the Chinese might retaliate by closing their ports to American ships, a move that could upset the U.S. economy. "Experience has shown that the trade of the East is the key to national wealth and influence," he said. "It needs no argument to show that the policy which we now propose to adopt must have a direct tendency to repel oriental nations from us and to drive their trade and commerce into more friendly lands." Opposing exclusion for its potentially dire economic consequences, Arthur then poked holes in the bill itself. He criticized the clause requiring Chinese immigrants to

carry passports. He criticized the clause requiring them to register with the government. He also criticized the bill for preventing Chinese laborers from simply passing through the U.S. en route to another country. The President then praised the Chinese for their contributions to the nation. He highlighted their "instrumental" role in building the transcontinental railroad and their efforts to develop the Pacific Coast. "There may ... be other sections of the country," he said, "where this species of labor may be advantageously employed without interfering with the laborers of our own race." These comments notwithstanding, Arthur fully endorsed the need to restrict Chinese immigration. He agreed that "the coming of such laborers ... affects our interests and endangers good order throughout the country," and he was "[d]eeply convinced of the necessity of some legislation on this subject...." In conclusion, he urged Congress to reconsider the legislation and attempt "a shorter experiment" with Chinese exclusion. In its main points--treaty violation, fear of loss of trade, and willingness to restrict Chinese immigration--Arthur's veto message was remarkably similar to that of Hayes three years earlier. A day later the Senate voted 29-21 to override the veto, five short of a two-thirds majority.⁴⁷

In vetoing the bill, Arthur clearly stressed that his main objection was to the length of exclusion, not exclusion itself. This concern over length--ten years versus twenty--

although trivial in retrospect remained the major point of contention among Republicans throughout the spring of 1882. The dispute was purely semantic, focusing on the interpretation of a word rather than the principle of the act. As the Chicago Tribune noted, "at some shadowy, indefinit[e] point between the ten and twenty year [limit], the boundary line between 'reasonable' and 'unreasonable' suspension." The effort to define this "shadowy indefinite point" monopolized most of the debate and deflected attention from the more important aspects of the bill. As John Sherman, the preeminent Republican senator, remarked: "some wise limitation upon the immigration of Chinese to this country would be voted for heartily by members of all political parties, of both houses, with scarcely any distinction." With the principle conceded, politicians' response to the veto focused not on Chinese immigration but on the political repercussions. "The dignified Senate," the New York Times noted, "was thrown into positive disorder immediately after the reading [of Arthur's message]." When queried by reporters the first thing Congressmen mentioned was the veto's political impact. It "has seriously impaired the future of the republican party," Senator Miller [R-CA] said, "and makes it certain that it cannot carry the Pacific coast for some time to come." The hapless Civil War general William S. Rosecrans, now a Democratic Representative from California, predicted that the Republican party would not

even contest the Congressional elections on the West Coast in the fall. The first words out of Senator Farley's mouth were that the veto was "the political ruin of Mr. Arthur." Democrats wondered if it would be better for them to override the veto or simply let it die with the Republicans shouldering the blame. The press also emphasized the political effects of the veto. One newspaper called it the "death-knell of the Republican party on the Pacific Coast." And the New York Tribune, after speaking with several members of the West Coast delegation, recounted that "some of them went so far as to say that the Republican party had elected its last President." Emphasis on such matters effectively squelched any lingering interest in discussing the future of Chinese immigration.⁴⁸

The veto caused an expected uproar in the West. Politicians denounced it, the press condemned it, and "[e]xpression of indignation, disgust, and discouragement were universal."⁴⁹ Arthur was hanged in effigy and burned at the stake. Easterners were less violent but similarly outraged. Mayor Carter Harrison of Chicago presided at a public meeting to protest the veto. After accusing the Chinese of widespread infanticide and prostitution, he claimed "that the result of their flooding this country would be disastrous to its purity.... The Chinese are weeds that we must root out." In New York, Democratic Boss John Kelly denounced the veto at a meeting of Tammany Hall.

Eastern ministers made similar comments. Condemning the veto, Presbyterian Reverend Dr. Arthur Swazey called the "Chinaman ... an obdurate and unmitigated heathen" who "comes loaded with pestilence," and Unitarian Reverend George W. Gallagher called Chinese immigration "fatal to the principles of our government." The clergy, like the Republican press, was in retreat.⁵⁰

While politicians and religious leaders spearheaded much of the protest, the bulk of the denunciations came at last from the working classes. Union leaders high and low conducted noisy indignation meetings or passed quiet resolutions of disgust. By far the largest demonstration took place in Philadelphia where John S. Kirchener, a leader of the Knights of Labor and editor of the Labor World, organized twenty-five local unions to join in protest on April 15. A turnout of 10,000 workers heard Greenback Congressman Thompson H. Murch of Maine and statistician Charles H. Zimmerman of the New Jersey Bureau of Labor denounce the President's veto and urge new legislation. Workers across the country added their voices to the choir. A St. Louis meeting featuring Richard Trevellick and Albert Parsons adopted resolutions denouncing the veto. So did the New York Central Labor Union, the Chicago Carpenters Union, and the Washington Federation of Labor. A banner carried by striking cigar makers in a march in Milwaukee may well have expressed the sentiments of many workers nationwide. The

banner portrayed a Chinese immigrant "hurrying to leave the country with umbrellas, old brooms, old shoes and other trash flying after him. The banner bore the inscription: 'Coolie labor the curse of civilization.'⁵¹

By the spring of 1882 organized labor had overwhelmingly rallied behind the bill to ban Chinese immigrants from the United States. Recent converts to exclusion, workers endorsed it wholeheartedly when passage in Congress became a foregone conclusion. Yet the nuances in working-class comments and labor press editorials suggest a slightly but vitally different picture. Whenever possible, workers still stressed the dangers of importation rather than immigration. John Jarrett, for example, president of both the Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers and the Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions, noted: "'The veto has aroused the working people everywhere, and there seems to be a universal sentiment against it. It isn't the Chinese labor that they object to, but coolie cheap labor; just as they object to hordes of cheap Italian or Scandinavian laborers being brought over here....'" Jarrett's complaint focused on the nature of the immigration not its origins. So did lengthy resolutions passed by the carpenters and joiners of Kansas City, Missouri, who used the word "importation" a half dozen times and avoided totally the word "immigration." They

specifically attacked the transport of workers "not by any voluntary act of the laborers themselves...."⁵²

The labor press, interestingly, expressed little delight when the bill passed nor great indignation when Arthur rejected it. The Irish World devoted just a brief mention to the veto. The journal regretted the President's action, but explained:

Let us not be misunderstood here. We do not oppose the Chinaman on account of any race prejudice. If our industrial system were what it ought to be, a system under which every worker received the full value of his labor, we should have no reason to fear Chinese immigration.

A duplicitous excuse? Perhaps, but the Carpenter said much the same thing. While calling the Chinese "dangerous to public health and human decency," the year-old labor paper edited by Peter J. McGuire stated: "We have no objection against their immigration--when they come here voluntarily--but we do object to their importation in hordes, under slavish contracts made in their native country, and held sacred by their religious fears." The language was virtually identical to that used twelve years earlier at North Adams. The enemy was not immigration but importation, or more precisely, the importers. "The real fight should be against the human hyenas who rummage the world over, and induce cheap labor to enter the field of industry and drag down our fellow workmen," the Carpenter explained. "[O]ur war should be directed against the system that seeks the cheaper labor at the expense of all culture and human

happiness." The Cigar Makers' Official Journal also stressed this distinction between immigration and importation. "We do not object to the Chinese because of their race or their language or their religion," the Journal stated in March, "but we do object to an organized effort to introduce cheap laborers into the Republic." The Journal also dismissed the popular argument in Congress that a "homogeneous race" was necessary for national survival, claiming instead that a unity of peoples could be best promoted through trade union activity. The editorial laid ultimate blame for Chinese exclusion on national politicians: "The failure of statesmanship in this country to solve the economic problem has necessitated this legislation."⁵³

In saying this, the Journal clearly indicted the nation's leaders for failing to deal effectively with problems of poverty and depression caused by massive industrial upheavals of the period. The United States had no comprehensive economic policy, no blueprint for a sustained recovery, no plan for providing for even the minimal welfare of its people. Neither innovation nor vision emanated from Washington. Government had no answers. Leaders had failed to lead. They had also failed to listen. Virtually every post-war working-class demand--eight-hour enforcement, public works, a federal bureau of labor--had fallen on deaf ears in the nation's capital. A ban on

imported contract labor had been foremost among these long-pressed demands. For twelve years, however, Congress had made no serious effort to legislate on this subject. The handful of bills introduced on importation had died in committee. The regulation of imported contract labor involved complex and intricate matters that would require massive bureaucratic machinery to oversee. Mere investigation of charges, Congressmen knew, would be a logistical nightmare. Agents would have to be stationed abroad and the entire diplomatic corps mobilized for enforcement. The sensitive matter of imposing American law on foreign soil further complicated the issue. Any statute on importation was bound to face major obstacles in operation.

Exclusion, on the other hand, was simple and direct. It involved minimal overhead or outlay of funds. Except for hiring a few extra customs agents to identify and turn back the excluded, no new expenses were anticipated and no expansion of government was necessary. Compared to the herculean task required to implement and then enforce a ban on imported contract labor, blanket exclusion was an easy alternative. For politicians Chinese exclusion served as a cheap panacea. And for workers in 1882 it was plainly the best they were going to get. National politicians had come through on little else in the past decade. Long-sought legislation on importation was nowhere in sight. Half a

loaf--even not of their own choosing--was better than none. As their comments indicate, workers in the East maintained a conscious distance from exclusion. Although they supported it they did not embrace it fully. Nor did they react with glee to its passage. It was not what they had asked for. Their words thus expressed a certain discomfort with exclusion. It was the wrong solution, the wrong approach, but no other remedial legislation from Washington was forthcoming. Congress had presented them with no alternatives. This by no means vindicates the working classes of complicity and endorsement of the Chinese Exclusion Act nor absolves them of racism or bigotry, not at all. It only serves to distinguish their actual role in the legislation and to place their actions in perspective. Workers were caught in a vicious web of poverty, oppression, and an unresponsive federal government. They were further imprisoned by the entrenched racism of the era as well as the machinations of politicians and a political system of near stalemate. Under the circumstances, it is remarkable that workers clung to their ideals as long as they did.

Even amid organized labor's general support for the bill, opposition to exclusion persisted. Chicago socialist George Sloan, whose epic poem in 1880 welcomed "free Chinese," called the bill a contradiction of socialist principles:

While there is room in the unbroken billions of acres
in the United States for uncountable millions of men,

no socialist would shut the doors of the country against the oppressed of any land.... The socialist asks no palliative, he wants simply justice for all, and free, natural competition.... every man on this earth has the same natural right to wander at will upon its surface as the fish has to swim where he likes through the currents of the all-embracing sea.... The Chinese may be all that is said of them, but the nation will suffer for it that connives at or legislates an injustice to them. 'Whoso doth it unto the least of those doth it unto me.'

Few took such a strong stand. The Paterson Labor Standard, never an advocate of exclusion, simply considered the bill wrongheaded and misdirected. "Why make so much noise about Chinese cheap labor," the paper asked in May, "when we see our own children being used in their tender years to bring down our wages?" Noting recent efforts to import Italian workers to the U.S., the Labor Standard commented: "Cheap labor is evidently cheap labor, whether it be Chinese, American or European." The Labor Standard, meanwhile, kept printing human interest articles that reflected rather favorably on the Chinese.⁵⁴

The most eloquent working-class statement, however, came not from any article or from anyone's pen but from a strike in Paterson, New Jersey. On April 7, three days after Arthur's veto, 75 white and Chinese shirt ironers in Price's mill walked off the job together demanding a penny per shirt raise. The Chinese, a reporter wrote,

are always ready to join any movement for an increase in pay. The white men say that the Chinamen are more to be depended upon than the Caucasians, for they never knew a Chinaman to break his word when he resolved to strike. They are always the last to give in, and are

considered first class strikers in every sense of the word.⁵⁵

Amid the anti-veto atmosphere across the nation, several Republicans rose to the defense of Chinese immigration, none more vigorously than Henry Ward Beecher. The prominent Brooklyn minister had staunchly opposed the Fifteen Passenger Act and was now one of the nation's most vocal proponents of Chinese immigration. In a dramatic sermon preached on March 26, 1882, he gave his reasons why. The nation, simply put, needed some group to offset the Irish. "Now, immigration is good;" he said:

I want it; but the vote is our big trouble. That is to say, the Irish vote--speaking good English. (Laughter.) The Irish people stand alone. They are the most mercurial, the most generous, the most distinguished for men of genius, the most admirable creatures that ever abominated the earth! (Laughter.) Their driving force is immense; their constructive force is minus. They have been the ablest destroyers of nations that ever were combined into armies; but they never built a nation yet and they never will--alone. In combination they are admirable. Now the Irish people pure and simple as they have come to us--unadulterated--are a vexation to municipal government.

Again the issue came down to politics. Beecher saw the Chinese as a group that could uplift the Irish to respectability and thereby neutralize and defuse their dangerous and corrupt voting habits. At the same time, the Chinese, because of their alleged docility and disinterest in citizenship, would present no threat to the body politic. In reasoning reminiscent of James Henry Hammond's famous "mud-sill" speech of 1859, Beecher declared:

If there is one thing that is clearer than another it is that all the dominant races--the Irish, English, German, Scotch--all those have an inspiration and an aspiration that is continually tending to drive them up from humble offices of life to higher duties, and in a score of years we shall have no race that will be willing to do what we call the menial work. It is for a people that will do this that this continent and age are hungering. More and more the other races are going up from the bottom and leaving the underwork of society to the poor of other and less ambitious peoples; and here is a race offered to us that by reason of their training, by the habits of a thousand years, are adapted to do that work....⁵⁶

The Chinese, willing to do "the underwork of society" and demand little in exchange--not citizenship, not suffrage--were, in Beecher's eyes, the ideal immigrants. Who else would do the "menial work"? No one but the "unambitious" Chinese. Their virtue lay in being at the bottom of the hierarchy of races. Beecher's penchant for comparing the features of various races and nationalities reflected the stereotypes and tendencies of middle-class authors and playwrights. As Beecher noted:

It is said the German will live on what a Yankee throws away, the Jew on what a German throws away and the Chinaman on what a Jew throws away, and it is just because the Chinese are industrious and know how to live on less than their mortal enemies, the Irish, that they have brought against themselves this Irish tirade--this abuse which has been poured upon them in our Fool-Congress. (Applause.)⁵⁷

Beecher's argument provoked instant outrage, from the Irish and from workers.⁵⁸ As Representative Charles Brumm [Greenback-Republican-PA] had argued the week before, such a policy of immigration would

establish caste and classifications of society, based upon blood and nationality.... You would have these

Chinamen here for commercial reasons only, that you may make of them the footstool for the higher orders of this Republic, and yet the tradition that you champion so well is founded on the eternal truth that 'all men are created equal.' Now let me ask, you, sir, where is your consistency?

Such reasoning as Beecher's, Brumm concluded, would create "different social grades, like the patricians, the plebeians, and the slaves of [ancient] Rome."⁵⁹

However repugnant Beecher's reasoning appeared to Greenback-Republican Brumm and others, it clearly struck a chord with his Brooklyn congregation. They applauded frequently and "nearly every one in the church stamped his or her feet" in approval. One observer noted that it was the most "fiery sermon" Beecher had delivered since the Civil War and that the response among his listeners was the most "emphatic demonstration" he had elicited in twenty years. Beecher's audience extended far beyond the confines of his church. He was the most prominent pastor of the Gilded Age, a mouthpiece for the nation's middle and upper classes. His influence was considerable, his arrogance infectious. Perhaps no sermon of his better captured the fears of the nation's well-to-do or the suppressed hatred toward the Irish embedded in the nation's Protestant majority. Racial superiority, Social Darwinism, and national progress--all accepted as givens--converged neatly in Beecher's colloquy. He felicitously compared immigrants to "mud." And mud, he explained, had two distinct properties: it was both "miasmatic" and fertilizing.

National policy, he said, should promote the latter and check the former, and here the Chinese provided the perfect solution. By occupying a perpetual lowly position as the nation's servile labor force (fertilizer for the nation's industry) the Chinese would act as a brake on political corruption (miasma), and save the nation from class war and social decay. Beecher's congregants no doubt worried that his solution might backfire: Suppose the Chinese did demand political rights? Suppose the Irish did not rise in society? Despite his influence, Beecher could still not dictate national policy. Nevertheless, he probably reflected the unspoken views of many old-line Protestants who opposed Chinese exclusion but had little faith or interest in an egalitarian society.⁶⁰

One other influential group strongly opposed the Chinese Exclusion Act: the merchant community of the Northeast connected with the China trade. Several Boston firms engaged in commerce with the Orient feared that the bill would endanger their business and they petitioned Congress to reject the legislation. Merchants connected with the New York City Board of Trade felt similarly, and leading bankers, dry goods dealers, iron manufacturers, insurance executives, and importers involved in the China trade signed a similar petition. One other important petition came from the Union League Club of New York and was signed by its president, former Secretary of State William

M. Evarts. The petition called the bill's twenty-year clause and passport requirement a violation of the Angell Treaty which would thus "impair the friendly relations" between the two nations and "place our citizens and merchants in China on a less favorable basis than the citizens and merchants of other countries...." Petitioners approved the President's veto and urged further "study [of] the subject." What is interesting in the Union League petition is that nothing was actually said against exclusion itself. The same was true for the Boston merchants' petition. Only one of the petitions, that from the New York City Board of Trade, opposed exclusion, but said nothing about restriction. Merchants feared that the bill's extreme nature violated the treaty and that Chinese retaliatory action could threaten trade. Such fears may have been well-grounded. Equivocation on immigration restriction, however, suggests that most merchants and leading businessmen did not oppose limitations on Chinese immigration on principle and that such limitations would be acceptable if kept within "reasonable" bounds.⁶¹

Thus at the climax of the Chinese exclusion debate in the spring of 1882, class lines definitely separated the two sides. Organized labor favored the bill while the merchant community opposed it. But as the foregoing analysis demonstrates the two groups were really not that far apart. Room for compromise existed. Congress knew it. The

President knew it. The press knew it. If twenty years seemed "unreasonable" and thereby threatened to violate the treaty, why not compromise on a shorter period of time? As the New York Tribune noted, a seven-year suspension would "certainly [be] long enough to give the experiment a fair trial." Ten years would also suffice. "If the bill works satisfactorily there would be no trouble in extending the period as often as necessary." The Tribune was both prophetic and judicious: "By using a little prudence and moderation we can undoubtedly accomplish all we need for our own welfare at home, and at the same time avoid the mistake of needlessly damaging our commercial relations abroad."⁶²

Congress reconsidered the legislation on April 17. Representative Horace F. Page [R-CA] introduced a new version of the bill which reduced the term of exclusion to ten years. The bill also substituted the word "certificate" for passport, a mere change in terminology intended to satisfy Arthur. Otherwise the bill was virtually the same.⁶³ Debate was brief but "gave rise to one of the most extraordinary scenes ever witnessed" in Congress. "For nearly an hour," the New York Tribune noted, "disorder ruled supreme, and Speaker [J. Warren] Keifer [R-OH] lost control of the House. Twenty members at a time were on the floor, shouting for recognition and plying the Speaker with 'parliamentary inquiries,' 'points of order' and 'questions

of privilege.'" The Democrats had two strategies: either to delay the vote and blame defeat on the Republicans, or strengthen the bill and thereby divide Republicans and insure a second veto. Either way the Democrats hoped to "gain some partisan advantage for themselves." So did the Republicans, who favored a speedy vote. To the very end, politics and political advantage remained the chief motivating force behind every stage in the formation and passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act. As a high-placed Republican functionary in California wrote, if the present bill failed, "the Pacific Coast will give a solid Democratic electoral vote.... We are now pretty thoroughly discouraged politically; but give us the House bill promptly passing the Senate, & promptly signed, & we can rally. Another veto,--a failure in any way to give us such a bill, & our party is swamped forever here." The letter's recipient, Republican national party leader William E. Chandler, no doubt made sure the message got through to Washington.⁶⁴

When the Speaker of the House at last restored order, John A. Kasson [R-IA] was the only principal orator. He had opposed the first version of the bill and deplored the partisan spirit presently raging. Eager to unite Republicans and satisfy the Pacific Coast but reluctant to reverse traditional national policy, Kasson stated:

I do not believe it to be just or the duty of the Congress of the United States to make itself a pack of hounds to hunt down any race born and permitted to live on God's earth ... to separate them from all other

... races of men ... to exclude them from American soil, to banish those who are now here from our midst, and to introduce a spirit of persecution, of race persecution, into the legislation of Congress, whose glory has been in the past to make America an asylum of the oppressed of all nations.

... If this bill went one hair's breadth beyond the principles which I have referred to and should provoke antipathy and war of races, I should hold it to be the duty of Congress to reject it. We, on this side of the House [the Republican side], have been and will remain the party of liberty, of justice, and of hospitality to all the oppressed nationalities of the earth; and may the day be far distant when we shall abandon that crowning glory of our history.⁶⁵

Such a day was not far distant at all, just a week or two away. Moments after Kasson's speech the House of Representatives approved the new version of the Chinese Exclusion Act, 201-37 (with 53 not voting). Half the 62 Republicans who had voted against the first bill switched their votes, 22 voting in favor, 10 not casting ballots. Republicans changing sides came from all regions. Six New Englanders did an about-face and supported the new version. So did all three Kansans, three New Yorkers, and ten others, including Kasson. All told, the Republican party approved the bill 90-34 (with 23 not voting); and the Democrats, 101-3 (with 29 not voting). No representative who had supported the first bill opposed the second. Of the four Democrats who had opposed the first bill only Hooker of Mississippi changed his vote and abstained. The final tally indicates the overwhelming bipartisan support for Chinese exclusion in the lower house of Congress (73% among voting Republicans,

97% among voting Democrats) from every region of the country except New England.⁶⁶

Debate in the Senate lasted a little longer. Southern senators again made efforts to turn the discussion into a forum on Reconstruction. In a hysterically anti-black speech, John Morgan [D-AL] feared that if the Exclusion Act failed to pass, Chinese immigrants would descend on the South, and together with blacks cause "the utter destruction of the last vestige of civilization we have there." Morgan hoped blacks would soon leave the region and open up the South to white settlement. The Alabama senator also noted that since the bill did not exclude a single "Mexican peon" one could not ascribe racial prejudice as a motivating factor in the legislation. Finally, Morgan repeated during his two-hour-long tirade what had now become a truism:

Is there any doubt about the majority of the people of the United States of both parties concurring ... that there must be a prohibition ... of Chinese immigration? Who will dare to rise up and confront the majesty of the people ... [and] deny its authority in this matter?⁶⁷

As Morgan himself answered, "Only a few." Senator Hoar delivered one final attack on the bill. So did Senator Hawley. "It reads as if it came from the dark ages," the eloquent Connecticut Republican declared. "It reads like the old fugitive-slave law." So exacting was Hawley in his humanitarian ideals that the New York Times chided him for "[h]is persistent appeals to the palladium of our liberties...." Hawley was indeed persistent. The bill, he

said, was a racist throwback to the Know-Nothing era, a repudiation of the nation's heritage, and a subversion of the right of a person to work wherever, whenever, and however he chose:

Let this proposed statute be read a hundred years hence, dug out of the dust of ages and forgotten as it will be except for a line of sneer by some historians, and ask the young man not well read in the history of the country what was the reason for excluding these men, and he would not find it in the law. He would find the Chinese laborer excluded for no cause except that he is a laborer.

And, Hawley could have added, because politicians needed votes in the West and managed to seize an issue to inveigle the working classes. But Hawley wanted nothing to do with Chinese exclusion: "I leave the bill to posterity for its condemnation. I plant myself here now, this moment, on the ground of unconditional hostility and denunciation. I will make no terms with it now or elsewhere here or hereafter, at any time." But even Hawley, proud scion of the abolitionist legacy, could not escape the winds of change. "I am willing," he said at last, "to regulate the immigration [from China].... I am willing to limit it; to restrict it." He had at last reversed his stance from 1870.

Humanitarianism had its boundaries. Hawley's dictum applied no less to himself: "Our zealous and radical republicanism is fading."⁶⁸

Only a few other senators spoke. George Vest [D-MO] called Chinese immigration as dangerous as woman suffrage. George Pendleton [D-OH], who would shortly champion the

Civil Service Act, claimed that exclusion would be good for China because it might lead the Chinese government along the path of reform. On the other side, George Edmunds apologized for his inability to support the bill. While he favored exclusion, he opposed the ban on citizenship which he felt violated the treaty. And finally Henry L. Dawes [R-MA] spoke and recounted the incident at North Adams in 1870 that had first ignited the national debate on Chinese immigration. He praised the actions of his old friend Calvin T. Sampson--"no man was ever fairer than he"--and defended contract labor. After twelve years, legislation was at last being passed--not the legislation workers wanted but the legislation politicians had fashioned.⁶⁹

On April 28, with a few slight alterations, the Senate passed the Chinese Exclusion Act, 32-15 (with 29 not voting). All 15 negative votes were Republican. Eleven Republicans supported the bill, and 13 did not vote. Of these 13, however, eight were paired in opposition. The Senate thus demonstrated considerably more anti-Exclusion Act sentiment than the House. But hardly enough to make a difference. The House assented to the Senate version on May 3 without a debate and without a vote. The next day Senate pro tem David Davis, the only Republican Senator who had switched his vote from no to yes, signed the bill and sent it to the White House.⁷⁰

Would President Arthur sign or veto it? In contrast to a month earlier, there was little drama and no excitement. Arthur held no Cabinet sessions nor received much mail. Although most of his objections remained unmet, few doubted that he would approve the bill.⁷¹ The West Coast vote was too important to his party. With neither fanfare nor ceremony, Chester Alan Arthur signed the Chinese Exclusion Act into law on May 6, 1882.⁷²

An eerie silence greeted its passage. Few editorials devoted much attention to it. Newspapers reported passage perfunctorily with scant comment or criticism. The New York Times put it simply: "It is to be hoped that this will settle the much-vexed Chinese question for a time at least."⁷³ But few others said even this much, and the labor press added little more. No meetings of workers, at least in the East, gathered to celebrate. Nor did any other groups or organizations meet to lavish praise or offer criticism. It appears that initially most Americans simply wanted to forget what the nation had just done.

The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 was the first law ever passed by the United States barring any group of people from American shores purely because of nationality. It provided a clear precedent, as many had foreseen, for future restrictive legislation. "Hereafter," the Chicago Times noted, "we are to keep our hand on the door-knob, and admit

only those whose presence we desire."⁷⁴ For the next hundred years Americans would indeed keep their hands on the doorknob, barring the Chinese again in 1892, 1902, and 1904, as well as the Japanese and Koreans a few years later. The knob was turned tighter in 1921 and 1924 when the U.S. partially closed the door to Europe. Not until World War II was the Chinese Exclusion Act repealed, but even then the United States sharply restricted immigration to a quota of 105 Chinese per year. Only recently has the door again begun to open, but Americans' grip on the doorknob remains almost as tight as ever.

The Chinese Exclusion Act neither caused nor made inevitable later restrictions on immigration but it certainly lent them legitimacy. It made future bans and quota systems easier to justify and easier to accept. By the early twentieth century when many of the bill's original sponsors had long since passed away, Chinese exclusion remained firmly embedded in the nation's laws. Renewals of the act passed with little opposition. The Exclusion Act legitimized racism and racism legitimized further exclusion. By no longer appearing as an aberration of traditional American policy, Chinese exclusion would have repercussions for generations to come. Its legacy, in the form of future restrictions and anti-Asian racism lingers to this day. The Chinese Exclusion Act remains one of the most infamous and tragic statutes in American history. It must also remain

one of the most ironic. No national sentiment arose to demand it, no broad effort emerged to prevent it. The Chinese Exclusion Act was a toy of politicians who in an era of tremendous upheaval and razor-sharp elections championed issues of paltry importance in the hopes of gaining a decisive handful of votes. In the name of morality, Gilded Age politicians used amoral tactics to enact an amoral law. Such tactics and such laws shortly became standard.

This lesson was not lost on contemporary observers. Kwong Ki Chiu, a Chinese official residing in Connecticut, recognized the underlying motivation behind the act. "I fear," he wrote just days before 400 million of his fellow countrymen and women would be excluded for generations from the United States, "that some of the supporters of the anti-Chinese bills do not act from principle, but are seeking, under cover of this bill, to promote some ulterior and selfish end, such as their own re-election or their possible nomination for the Presidency."⁷⁵

More than a century has passed since Kwong wrote these words. The issues have changed but the political system itself remains essentially the same.

NOTES

1. On the two earlier special sessions of the 47th Congress, see above, chapter 11, 1n.
2. The Statutes at Large of the United States of America, from December, 1881, to March, 1883, and Recent Treaties, Postal Conventions, and Executive Proclamations, XXII (Washington, 1883), pp. 826, 828. For a more detailed account of the assassination and Garfield's last days, any of the standard biographies will suffice. See, for example, Allan Peskin, Garfield (Ohio: Kent State, 1978), chapter 25. For an interesting portrait of the assassin and his trial, see Charles E. Rosenberg, The Trial of the Assassin Guiteau: Psychiatry and Law in the Gilded Age (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1968).
3. Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 5 (Dec. 5, 1881), 89 (Dec. 13, 1881). See also pp. 217 (Dec. 19, 1881), 561 (Jan. 23, 1882), 630, 645 (Jan. 26, 1882), 737 (Jan. 30, 1882). For a text of the bill, see pp. 1480-81 (Feb. 28, 1882), and amendments, pp. 1749, 1750 (March 9, 1882). For a synopsis of the early Congressional activity, see New York Herald, March 18, 1882, p. 4.
4. Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess. Miller's speech appears on pp. 1481-88 (Feb. 28, 1882). The quotes are from pp. 1481, 1487.
5. Ibid., pp. 1482-85 (Feb. 28, 1882).
6. Ibid., pp. 1483, 1484, 1486, 1487 (Feb. 28, 1882).
7. Ibid., pp. 1484-87 (Feb. 28, 1882).
8. Ibid., pp. 1487-88 (Feb. 28, 1882); New York Herald, March 1, 1882, p. 3.
9. On Hoar, see George Frisbie Hoar, Autobiography of Seventy Years, 2 vols. (New York: Scribners, 1903); Richard E. Welch, Jr., George Frisbie Hoar and the Half-Breed Republicans (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1971), especially chapter 1, pp. 5, 7-8, and chapter 2, pp. 28, 31-35. Hoar remained a chief advocate of federal aid to public and black education. In 1890, he sponsored the Federal Election, or "Force," Bill, the last major effort to protect black voting rights in the South until the 1960s. Hoar also spoke out strongly against the anti-Catholic American Protective Association. As Hoar grew older he grew more conservative toward labor. On his earlier attitudes, see David Montgomery, Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical

Republicans, 1862-1872 (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois, 1967), pp. 372-73.

10. In response, Senator John P. Jones [R-NV] argued, quoting the fashionable scientific racist J.A. de Gobineau, that the Chinese did not invent these items "but stole them from stray Aryan Caucasian people who had wandered into their midst." (Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., p. 1582 (March 3, 1882).)

11. For Hoar's speech, see Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 1515-23 (March 1, 1882). The quotes are from pp. 1515, 1516, 1518, 1520. The exchange with Senator Jones on Chinese inventions took place on March 3. See ibid., p. 1582.

12. Ibid., pp. 1516, 1517, 1523 (March 1, 1882).

13. New York Times, March 4, 1882, p. 4; March 9, 1882, p. 4; March 24, 1882, p. 4; New York Tribune, March 3, 1882, p. 4.

14. Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 1546 (March 2, 1882), 1635 (March 6, 1882), 1740 (March 9, 1882).

15. Ibid., pp. 1484, 1485 (Feb. 28, 1882), 1636, 1645 (March 6, 1882), 1713 (March 8, 1882), 1741, 1742, 1744 (March 9, 1882).

16. Ibid., pp. 1583-84 (March 3, 1882), 1637 (March 6, 1882), 1715 (March 8, 1882).

17. Ibid., pp. 1638 (March 6, 1882), 1670 (March 7, 1882), 1753 (March 9, 1882). Most Southerners who spoke connected the issue to Reconstruction. See, for example, the speeches of Augustus H. Garland [D-AR], Thomas F. Bayard [D-DE], and James Z. George [D-MS], pp. 1586, 1588 (March 3, 1882), 1637 (March 6, 1882).

18. For background on Brown, see C. Vann Woodward, Tom Watson: Agrarian Rebel (New York: Oxford, 1938), pp. 56-61, 66, 68, 70-71, 84-86, 106, 110-11. The quote is from Eric Foner, Reconstruction: America's Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877 (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), p. 299.

19. Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 1639-44 (March 6, 1882).

20. Ibid.

21. Ibid., p. 1636 (March 6, 1882).
22. Chicago Times, March 8, 1882, p. 2. Edmunds, it might be recalled, had recommended James B. Angell to Secretary of State Evarts to head the treaty commission to China in 1880.
23. Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., p. 1674 (March 7, 1882).
24. Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 1674 (March 7, 1882), 1710-11 (March 8, 1882).
25. Ibid., p. 1709 (March 8, 1882).
26. Chicago Times, March 8, 1882, p. 2; Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., p. 1674 (March 7, 1882).
27. Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 1707 (March 8, 1882), 1746, 1748, 1751, 1752, 1753 (March 9, 1882), 2608 (April 5, 1882).
28. Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 1702-03, 1705, 1706 (March 8, 1882).
29. Ibid., p. 1715 (March 8, 1882).
30. Ibid., pp. 1738-39 (March 9, 1882). On Hawley's earlier statements, see chapter 1.
31. Ibid., p. 1753 (March 9, 1882).
32. Ibid., pp. 1904 (March 14, 1882), 1975 (March 16, 1882), 2030, 2033 (March 18, 1882), 2126 (March 21, 1882), 2208, 2210 (March 23, 1882), Appendix, p. 39 (March 16, 1882). Because the Chinese were so different from any other people in the world, Representative Emory Speer [D-GA] considered it "extremely unjust" to compare them to Germans or Irish. He did compare them to blacks, however, and neatly summarized the racial differences: the negro was "deeply emotional," the Chinese "cold"; the negro was "sympathetic and kind-hearted," the Chinese "callous and indifferent"; the negro was susceptible to poetry and eloquence, the Chinese not; the negro was "intensely religious" ("Perhaps sometimes he backslides ... but he can be converted again."), the Chinese had no god, fearing only the devil; the negro loved rhythm and music, the Chinese loved discordant sounds and disharmony. All told, Speer concluded, "A typical negro is infinitely superior to a typical Chinaman...." (Ibid., p. 2029 (March 18, 1882).)

33. Ibid. The quotes, in order, were by Charles N. Brumm [Greenback-Republican-PA], p. 2044 (March 18, 1882); Melvin C. George [D-OR], p. 2164 (March 22, 1882); Richard W. Townshend [D-IL], pp. 2214, 2212 (March 23, 1882); Campbell P. Berry [R-CA], p. 2035 (March 18, 1882); and Buckner, p. 2138 (March 21, 1882).

34. Ibid., pp. 1937, 1938 (March 15, 1882), 2174, 2175 (March 22, 1882), 2186, 2187-88 (March 23, 1882 [misdated March 22]), 2216 (March 23, 1882), Appendix, pp. 50, 51 (March 16, 1882). Other Republicans in addition to Orth making arguments based largely on principle included William R. Moore [TN], Cyrus C. Carpenter [IA], Charles R. Skinner [NY], Thomas M. Browne [IN]; and Rufus Dawes [OH]. It may be added that of these six Republicans (including Orth who shortly died), only two, Skinner and Browne, returned to Congress, and only Browne for more than one term. (Ibid., pp. 2035-36, 2037-38, 2040-41 (March 18, 1882), 2177-82, 2183 (March 23, 1882 [misdated March 22])).)

35. Ibid., pp. 1980, 1982, 1983, 1984 (March 16, 1882). Charles H. Joyce [R-VT] took a similar position. "This bill," he said, "is a bold and audacious denial of this great principle of expatriation; it is a declaration limiting and circumscribing human rights; it flies in the face of the spirit and genius of our institutions, and would ... fix a stigma and a blot upon the history of our country...." He then quickly added: "I do not claim that a large influx of Chinese would be either desirable or profitable...." (Ibid., pp. 2184-85 (March 23, 1882 [misdated March 22])).)

36. Ibid., pp. 2043 (March 18, 1882), 2139 (March 21, 1882), Appendix, p. 63 (March 22, 1882).

37. Ibid., p. 2035 (March 18, 1882). For Hooker's speech, see pp. 2134-38 (March 21, 1882). The quotes are from pp. 2134, 2137. Chicago Times, March 22, 1882, p. 5; Chicago Tribune, March 22, 1882, p. 4.

38. Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., p. 2184 (March 23, 1882 [misdated March 22]), Appendix, pp. 92-93 (March 16, 1882).

39. Ibid., p. 2227 (March 23, 1882). The exact breakdown of the vote was as follows: Yes--95 Democrats, 61 Republicans, 5 Greenbackers, 2 Readjusters; No--4 Democrats, 62 Republicans. Not Voting--33 Democrats, 25 Republicans. Excluded from the data above are four representatives with split affiliations. Voting yes were 1 Greenback-Republican, 1 Greenback-Democrat, and 1 Republican-Democrat. One Greenback-Democrat did not vote.

The regional categories include the following states: West--Cal., Col., Nev., Ore.; South--Ala., Ark., Del., Fla., Ga., Ky., La., Md., Miss., N.C., S.C., Tenn., Tex.; New England--Ct., Mass., N.H., R.I., Vt.; Mid-Atlantic--N.J., N.Y., Pa.; Midwest--Ill., Ind., Iowa, Kans., Mich., Minn., Mo., Neb., Oh., W.V., Wisc.

40. Chicago Tribune, March 15, 1882, p. 4, March 19, 1882, p. 4, March 24, 1882, p. 4, March 28, 1882, p. 4; New York Times, March 24, 1882, p. 4. See also March 7, 1882, p. 4. New York Tribune, March 10, 1882, p. 4, March 24, 1882, p. 1, April 6, 1882, p. 4. As the Chicago Tribune summed up, the debate was "characterized by hard facts upon one side and sentiment on the other." (Chicago Tribune, March 18, 1882, p. 4.)

41. Chicago Times, March 9, 1882, p. 2.

42. James B. Angell, "The Diplomatic Relations Between the United States and China," Journal of Social Science, XVII:II (May 1883), pp. 34, 35; Chicago Tribune, March 28, 1882, p. 4. Angell delivered the speech on September 7, 1882.

43. New York Herald, March 18, 1882, p. 4; Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., p. 2184 (March 23, 1882 [misdated March 22]); Chicago Tribune, March 24, 1882, p. 4.

44. On Arthur's background and rise to power, see Thomas C. Reeves, Gentleman Boss: The Life of Chester Alan Arthur (New York: Knopf, 1975).

45. Arthur quoted in Chicago Times, Dec. 7, 1881, p. 3. On the term "Acting President," see, for example, Chicago Tribune, March 28, 1882, p. 4.

46. Chicago Tribune, March 27, 1882, p. 1, April 1, 1882, p. 2, April 2, 1882, p. 3, April 5, 1882, p. 1; Chicago Times, March 30, 1882, p. 3, April 4, 1882, p. 3; New York Herald, March 29, 1882, p. 3; Grant interviewed in Chicago Times, March 31, 1882, p. 3; "T.W." (letter from Thurlow Weed, New-York, March 28, 1882) in New York Tribune, March 29, 1882, p. 5; Phillips quoted in New York Tribune, March 27, 1882, p. 1.

47. Chicago Times, April 5, 1882, p. 3; New York Times, April 5, 1882, p. 1. For the text of Arthur's message, see Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 2551-52 (April 4, 1882). On the vote to override, see ibid., p. 2617 (April 5, 1882).

48. Chicago Tribune, April 5, 1882, p. 1; New York Times, April 5, 1882, p. 1; New York Tribune, April 5, 1882, p. 1. Sherman quoted in Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., p. 2608 (April 5, 1882); Miller, Rosecrans, and Farley quoted in Chicago Times, April 5, 1882, p. 3.

49. For a sample of West Coast opinion, see excerpts reprinted in Chicago Times, April 5, 1882, p. 3.

50. Carpenter, May 1882, p. 1; Harrison quoted in Chicago Times, April 16, 1882, p. 10; Kelly quoted in ibid., April 7, 1882; Swazey quoted in ibid., May 7, 1882, p. 13; Gallagher quoted in New York Herald, April 3, 1882, p. 8, April 17, 1882, p. 5. Both ministers, it might be added, were virulently anti-labor and anti-union.

51. Jno. S. Kirchener to Terence V. Powderly, April 7, 1882, Powderly Papers, Catholic University; Chicago Times, April 16, 1882, p. 10; New York Tribune, April 7, 1882, p. 1; Chicago Express, May 13, 1882, p. 3; Chicago Daily News, April 28, 1882, p. 1; Irish World, April 29, 1882, p. 2; Chicago Tribune, April 6, 1882, p. 6; San Francisco Truth, May 31, 1882, p. 1; F. Hirth (letter, Milwaukee, May 4, 1882) in Cigar Makers' Official Journal, May 15, 1882, p. 2.

For pro-bill sentiment among workers while Congress was deliberating, see Robert D. Layton to Terence V. Powderly, Pittsburgh, March 16, 1882, and enclosed circular, Powderly Papers; resolution of Pennsylvania miners in New York Herald, March 19, 1882, p. 13; resolutions of the Chicago Trades and Labor Assembly in Chicago Times, March 13, 1882, p. 5, March 20, 1882; and resolutions of Canton, Ohio, cigar makers addressed to Rep. William McKinley in Canton Daily Repository, reprinted in Cigar Makers' Official Journal, April 15, 1882, p. 1.

52. Chicago Times, April 21, 1882, p. 7; Carpenter, Feb. 1882, p. 3.

53. Irish World, April 15, 1882, p. 6; Carpenter, June 1882, p. 3; Cigar Makers' Official Journal, March 15, 1882, p. 1. Peter J. McGuire began publishing the Carpenter in St. Louis in May 1881. The following December he moved the paper to New York City.

54. Chicago Daily News, April 13, 1882, p. 1; Paterson Labor Standard, May 20, 1882, p. 1, June 17, 1882, p. 2. Human interest articles included "Chinamen as Nursery Maids" (April 29, 1882, p. 3), "Chinese Lotteries" (May 20, 1882, p. 1), and "Marriage Among the Chinese" (Sept. 23, 1882, p. 1). On Sloan, see above, chapter 9.

55. New York Herald, April 8, 1882, p. 4. The New York Tribune claimed strikers sought a raise of 1/2 cent per shirt. (New York Tribune, April 8, 1882, p. 2.)

56. Beecher's sermon reprinted in New York Herald, March 27, 1882, p. 8. Beecher's rhetoric included one of the earliest references to the "melting pot" idea: "When the cook has gathered from the sea and from the forest and the garden all the substances required for a great banquet he mixes them together in due proportion. Separately they may not be pleasant to the taste; but he throws in a little salt and some pepper and other condiments, and when the banquet is ready these condiments that have been thrown in make the dish provoke the appetite of the world. I tell you one of the most important condiments ever thrown into this national broth that we are stewing here is the Irish. If they don't give spice and piquancy to it then my palate is sadly at fault."

57. Ibid.

58. See, for example, Chicago Times, March 30, 1882, p. 3. So incensed was Thomas J. Carey of the United Workingmen's League that he challenged Beecher to a public debate.

59. Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., p. 2043 (March 18, 1882).

60. New York Herald, March 27, 1882, p. 8.

61. Petition of George C. Richardson & Co. in Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., p. 3076 (April 20, 1882). See also New York Tribune, April 7, 1882, p. 2; New York Times, April 13, 1882, p. 3. Petition of New York City Board of Trade in Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., p. 2878 (April 14, 1882). See also New York Tribune, April 14, 1882, p. 4; New York Herald, April 14, 1882, p. 6. Petition of Union League Club of New York City, April 14, 1882, in Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., p. 3207 (April 24, 1882). See also New York Tribune, April 14, 1882, p. 4.

62. New York Tribune, April 8, 1882, p. 4.

63. For a complete text of the bill, see Statutes at Large of the United States, XXII, pp. 58-61.

64. New York Tribune, April 18, 1882, p. 1; George A. Nourse to William E. Chandler, San Francisco, April 21, 1882, Chandler Papers, Library of Congress.

65. Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 2972-73 (April 17, 1882). Kasson, interestingly, was the only politician singled out for praise in T. Fulton Gantt's 1887 working-class novel, Breaking the Chains: A Story of Industrial Struggle. (See Mary C. Grimes, ed., The Knights in Fiction: Two Labor Novels of the 1880s (Urbana, Ill., 1986), p. 55.)

66. Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 2973-74 (April 17, 1882).

67. Ibid. For Morgan's speech, see pp. 3266-70 (April 25, 1882). The quotes are from pp. 3267, 3268, 3269. See also speeches of George Vest [D-MO], pp. 3357-59 (April 27, 1882) and Wilkinson Call [D-FL], pp. 3405-06, and exchange with Edmunds, p. 3407 (April 28, 1882).

68. Ibid., p. 3268 (April 25, 1882). For Hoar's speech, see p. 3265 (April 25, 1882). For Hawley's speech, see p. 3264 (April 25, 1882) and Appendix, pp. 183-86 (April 26, 1882). New York Times, April 27, 1882, p. 3.

69. Congressional Record, 47th Cong., 1st sess., pp. 3354, 3355-57, 3359 (April 27, 1882), 3412 (April 28, 1882). Edmunds favored exclusion as a peace-keeping effort to appease "the sand-lot people" of San Francisco: "It does not make any difference which class of the community it is that disturbs the public peace, the public peace is disturbed and if you can save it by giving time for reason to restore itself and passion to cool, is it not wise? ... Then let us protect the Chinamen by having them hold up a little while until they [the sand-lotters] get over their trouble.... it comes to a mere question of expediency." Compare this argument to that of Blaine during the debate over the Fifteen Passenger Act in chapter 8. (Ibid., Appendix, pp. 185, 186 (April 26, 1882).)

70. Ibid., pp. 3412 (April 28, 1882), 3532 (May 3, 1882), 3588 (May 4, 1882).

71. For an exception, see New York Herald, April 29, 1882, p. 3.

72. Statutes at Large of the United States, XXII, p. 61.

73. New York Times, May 9, 1882, p. 4.

74. Chicago Times, April 25, 1882, p. 2.

75. Kwong Ki Chiu (letter, Hartford, Connecticut, April 29, 1882) in New York Herald, May 1, 1882, p. 5.

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